PPMC MAGAZINE

SOUTH AFRICA

PHOTOGRAPHY, PAGEANTRY, MODELING AND COMPETITIONS

Baxolile Gqaleni

Ronelle Bester

Sarah Walker

Pertunia Molobela

Saskia de Jager

Tshepang Montsho

Issue 163

Featuring **National & International** *Models*

Cover Model

Charlene Kleynhans

Face of PPMC Magazine 2025 Overall Winner

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PHOTOGRAPHY, PAGEANTRY, MODELING AND COMPETITIONS

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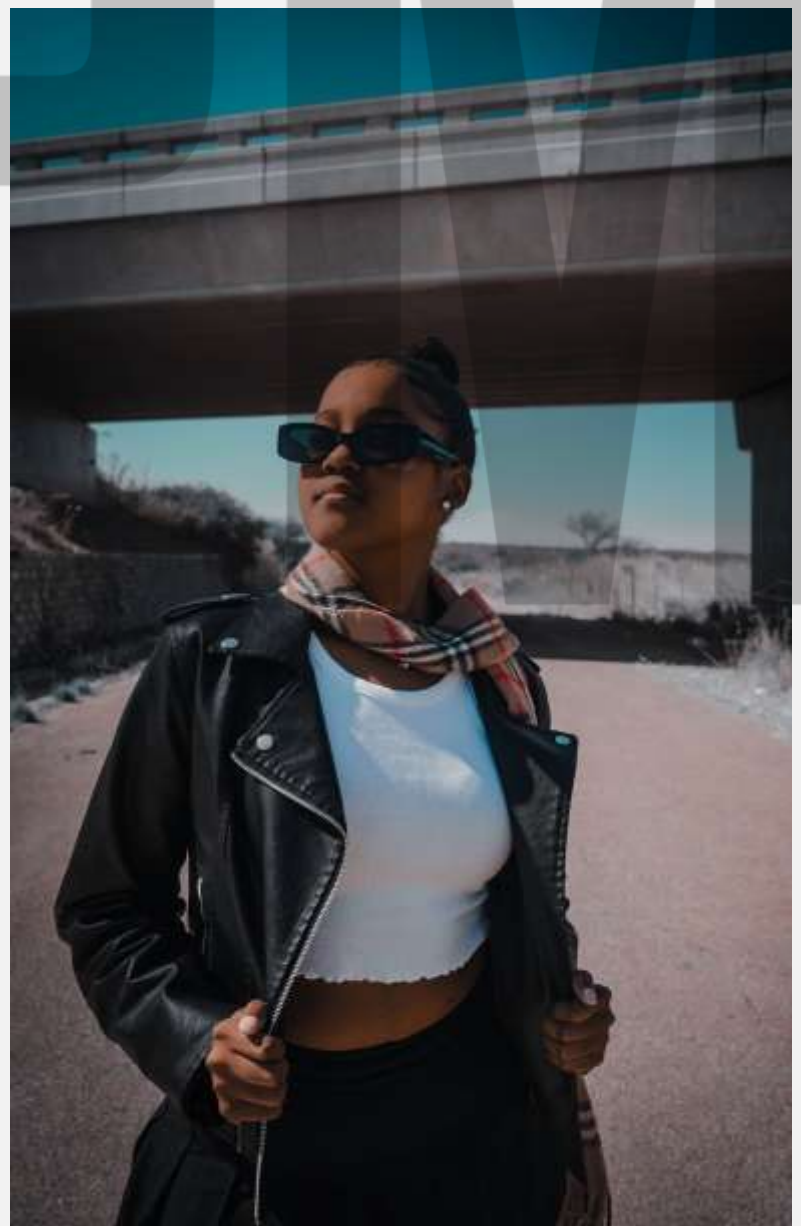

#Finalist

Interview with Mosa Makgaleng

Limpopo Model Search 2026 Finalist

Mosa Makgaleng is a 23-year-old model from Polokwane, Limpopo, a city known for its vibrant spirit and cultural richness. Born and raised in this city, Mosa says it shaped her in ways that blend quiet strength with a love for life's beauty. "True to the meaning of my name, I move through life with grace and intention, embracing authenticity, quiet strength, and a deep ability to connect with others," she says.

When Mosa found out she had been selected as a Limpopo Model Search 2026 finalist, she felt a mix of excitement and gratitude. "I felt incredibly excited and grateful, especially considering that I entered the competition on the last day. It reminded me that timing doesn't limit purpose, and that taking a chance, even at the last moment, can still lead to something meaningful," she explains.

Mosa first learned about the competition last year during the Mannequin Challenge at Foschini in the Mall of the North, but it wasn't until a friend sent her the poster on January 30, 2026, that she decided to enter. "That moment felt like a nudge. I've always had an interest in modelling, particularly high fashion and brand content. Although I grew up loving Toddlers & Tiaras, Miss SA, and attending pageants, my passion has evolved toward fashion, creative expression, and commercial brand modelling," she says.

What drew her most to the competition was its accessibility. "No prior experience was required, and it wasn't heavily focused on pageantry. It felt modern and aligned with where I see myself," Mosa says. She laughs as she reflects on her journey so far. "It's actually quite funny when I think about it. I've been surrounded by modelling for most of my life, from attending pageants to teaching my younger cousins what I'd learned, styling them, and even hosting our own little competitions at home. Yet, I don't have formal modelling experience. Entering Limpopo Model Search felt like a natural next step, turning something I've always loved into a real opportunity."

Mosa's modelling journey is still in its early stages, but she's been learning quickly. "I've begun expressing myself more creatively through my Instagram, particularly by shooting with @thevisualguys_za. These shoots have helped me explore confidence in front of the camera, understand movement, and develop my personal style," she says. She views this phase as a foundation: learning, experimenting, and growing into the space with intention.

The competition itself has been both challenging and rewarding. "The most exciting part has been learning to champion myself by asking for votes, sharing my journey, and confidently putting myself forward. Being selected as a finalist affirmed that I belong in this space," Mosa says. The hardest part, she adds, has been stepping outside her comfort zone and trusting her growth despite limited formal experience. "Navigating self-doubt while showing up confidently has required courage, but it's also been the most rewarding part of the journey."

Through this experience, Mosa has grown in ways she hadn't expected. "This competition has helped me believe in myself more openly. It's pushed me to speak up, advocate for myself, and show up confidently, even when I feel unsure. I've learned that confidence isn't about having everything figured out; it's about trusting my growth and embracing who I am at each stage," she says.

Her biggest supporters have been a mix of family and friends. "I can't pinpoint just one person because I've been lucky to have so many people supporting me in different ways. Some were quietly cheering me on, others more visibly encouraging me. Now that I've taken the first step into modelling, they've come out fully to support me, and that's honestly one of the most special parts of this journey," Mosa says.

She's also learned surprising things about the modelling industry. "What surprised me most is how much goes on behind the scenes — the planning, the creative vision, and the effort it takes to bring even a single shoot or campaign to life. Modelling isn't just about looking good on camera; it's about storytelling, professionalism, and collaboration," she says. Preparation, she explains, goes beyond technique. "Before a big casting, shoot, or runway walk, I like to center myself and get into the right mindset. I practice my poses, plan my outfit, and visualize myself performing well. Preparation is about feeling grounded, confident, and ready to express myself fully."

Mosa says what sets her apart from the other finalists is her authenticity and versatility. "I bring a unique combination of grace, creativity, and confidence, shaped by my journey from pageants to exploring high-fashion and brand modelling. I genuinely love expressing myself, telling stories through movement and style, and inspiring others along the way."

Looking ahead, Mosa sees a bright future. "Winning Limpopo Model Search 2026 would be an incredible opportunity to launch my modelling career, work with amazing brands, and grow both professionally and personally. Beyond that, it would also be a chance to inspire others who, like me, are taking their first steps into modelling," she says. Her biggest dream is to get signed with a reputable agency and work with both commercial and high-fashion brands.

Her advice to young people considering competitions is simple. "Just take the leap. It can feel intimidating, especially when it's something new or you feel inexperienced. Opportunities like this are about growth, learning, and showing up as yourself. Most people are waiting for someone to try first, and by taking that step, you give yourself the chance to discover what you're capable of. You might surprise yourself," Mosa says.

From Polokwane to the stage of Limpopo Model Search, Mosa Makgaleng is proving that courage, creativity, and authenticity can open doors — one step at a time.

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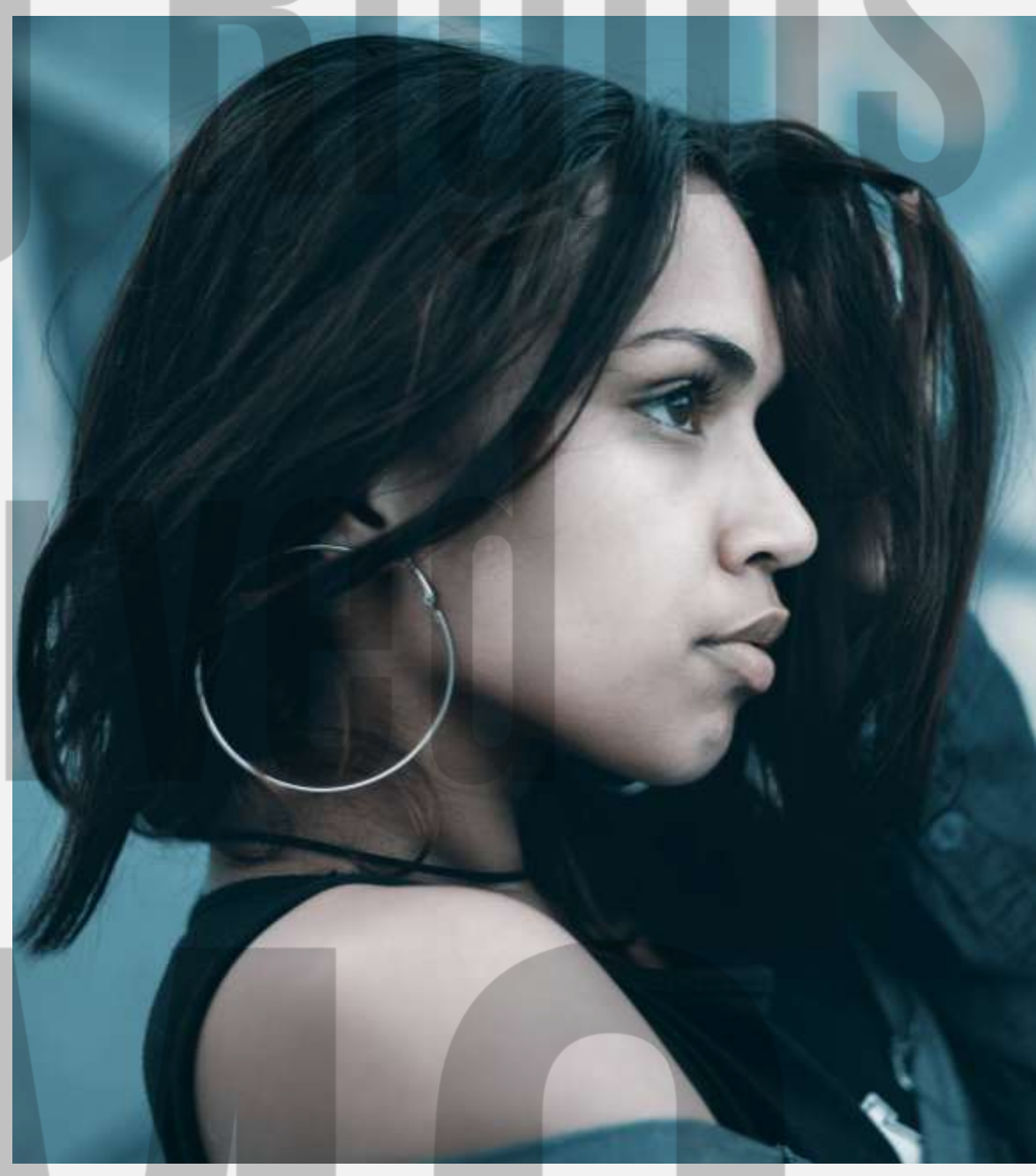

Mia Liyah

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 163

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#Music

Interview with Mia Liyah

Fearless Dreams, Bold Music Journey

A story by:
Etaiya Briscoe

Mia is not just a stage name. It is a bold identity that lives alongside the young woman behind the mic, a version of herself built around big dreams and fearless ambition. At 24, Mia has already spent a decade shaping her sound and carving out her space in music. “I created Mia Liyah outside of my daily life, centered around my pursuit to be a selling global star,” Mia says with a calm confidence that feels hard-earned.

Music has been part of Mia’s life since childhood. “I sang since I was three, uncontrollably, and I loved performing, so yes, it was always something I wanted to do,” she says. By 14, she was writing her own songs, pouring teenage thoughts and emotions into lyrics. A year later, her path became clearer. “I just always rapped and sang, and one day I was introduced to a local producer,” Mia explains.

“Because I was exposed to a music scene at like 15, I eventually got to a producer who was willing to record me. I paid him for my first session, and once he heard me, he said he would never charge me again.” That early vote of confidence changed everything. “Because of that experience and the music that came out of that session, I found my way to everyone I still work with today,” she says.

Mia’s sound does not sit neatly in one box. She moves between hip hop and alternative pop, always chasing something fresh. “I enjoy exploring sounds and pushing boundaries when it comes to art and self-expression,” she says. “I am a risk taker and definitely the kind of artist who believes in being a rebel with a cause.” For Mia, being different is not for attention, it is a statement. “Stand up for what’s good and innovative, even if it means you’re seen as the rebel,” she adds.

Her journey has not been backed by major management teams or big budgets. Mia built her career step by step. “My proudest accomplishment as an artist is my EPs that I have released on all digital streaming platforms and performing on some of the biggest stages in my city without management or anyone backing me,” she says. Those performances helped shape her into a confident entertainer. While she does not play an instrument, she brings energy in other ways. “I am more for entertaining, singing, rapping, dancing and acting,” Mia explains.

Behind the scenes, discipline plays a big role. “Before I sing, I drink water and meditate,” she says. Long studio hours can be demanding, but Mia has her own simple routine. “Ginger with hot water and honey,” she says with a smile when asked how she keeps her voice healthy.

Beyond the spotlight, Mia’s life is full and grounded. She reads, writes short stories, and enjoys binge-watching her favourite shows when she is not performing. She is also a mother to a two-year-old daughter, a role she holds close to her heart. Support from loved ones keeps her going during tough moments.

“My greatest supporter is definitely my best friend, who tells me to never give up through my challenges,” she says. When it comes to inspiration, she looks up to global stars who balance artistry and influence. “My role models are Taylor Swift and Kendrick Lamar,” Mia shares. Mia’s ambitions stretch far beyond chart numbers. In 2022, she started a community organisation focused on promoting art and culture in underprivileged communities like the one she grew up in, Gelvandale in Nelson Mandela Bay. Giving back is not an afterthought, it is part of her mission. She also speaks openly about causes close to her heart.

“I am advocating for positive masculinity campaigns because young men in marginalized communities need more support and inspiration,” she says. She raises awareness about narcissistic abuse and mental health, drawing from her own lived experiences. “I have had many challenges with my own mental health due to traumatic events I have survived,” she adds.

Looking ahead, Mia’s goals are clear and bold. “In 10 years, I see myself as a Grammy awarded artist, someone who has left my mark and created a positive impact,” she says. This year, she hopes to travel more and continue growing both personally and professionally.

Through it all, Mia holds tight to a strong sense of self. “My greatest strength as an artist is understanding that I am a brand,” she explains. “I love every aspect of being an artist, and I can stay true to who I truly am despite being a performer.” Her advice to others chasing similar dreams comes from experience.

“Create peace for yourself as a balance because fighting for your dreams is a tough journey. Find contentment and knowledge of yourself. When you know who you are, this world cannot steal your essence.”

One quote she lives by sums up her fearless outlook. “Why not risk life when it’s going to keep going,” Mia says, smiling. For her, standing still has never been an option.

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Pertunia Molobela

Instagram: @pertunia_molobela

Growing up in Soweto, Braamfischerville, Pertunia Molobela learned lessons that shaped the woman she is today. “Growing up in Soweto, Braamfischerville, was a wild ride. Raised by a single mom who worked her butt off, I learned resilience and determination. Our community's spirit is unmatched – we stuck together, and that shaped me,” she says. Representing her community as a Mrs Supranational South Africa Finalist 2026 is a dream come true. “I want to show people that no matter where you come from or what your circumstances, you can achieve anything. My mom's sacrifices and the community's love drove me to do this. I want to inspire others to chase their dreams, no matter the odds. Nothing's impossible if you put your mind to it.”

Pertunia’s advocacy work stems from personal experience. A survivor of domestic violence, she recalls the moment everything changed. “The turning point came the night I realized that if I stayed silent, the cycle would continue – not just for me, but possibly for my children and other women watching from a distance. For a long time, I normalized the abuse. I made excuses. I convinced myself that love required endurance. But the day I looked in the mirror and no longer recognized the woman staring back at me – emotionally drained, walking on eggshells, shrinking to survive – something inside me shifted. I understood that survival was not the same as living.”

Deciding to leave the abuse was only the beginning. “The real turning point was when I chose myself. When I gathered the courage to leave, to speak, and to seek help. In that process, I met other women carrying the same hidden bruises – some physical, many emotional. I realized how many of us suffer in silence because of shame, fear, financial dependency, or the hope that ‘he will change.’ That’s when I knew my story could no longer be private pain. It had to become public purpose.” Today, Pertunia uses her voice to educate and empower survivors, creating safe spaces where dignity is restored.

Her activism extends to HIV/AIDS awareness, inspired by witnessing the impact of the virus in her community. “What motivated me most was realizing that education saves lives – but empathy restores dignity. I have met women who were afraid to test because of judgment, mothers who felt their diagnosis meant their dreams were over, young people who lacked accurate information. That broke my heart. I knew I could not stay silent when knowledge, prevention, and support could change outcomes.”

She emphasizes three key messages: end the stigma, educate for prevention, and promote hope and healthy living. “HIV is a health condition – not a moral sentence. People living with HIV deserve respect, love, and equal opportunities. With proper treatment, individuals can live long, healthy, beautiful lives. My voice is my tool. I use it to educate, to uplift, and to fight for a generation that is informed, empowered, and stigma-free.”

#Pageant

Interview with Pertunia Molobela

Mrs Supranational South Africa Finalist 2026

Pageantry became another channel for her advocacy. “I first got involved in pageantry because I realized it is more than beauty; it is a powerful leadership platform. Mrs Supranational South Africa 2026 drew me because it celebrates the modern, purpose-driven woman. It aligns perfectly with who I am – a woman who has survived, healed, built, and now serves. This journey is not about a title – it’s about representation. It’s about showing that your past does not disqualify you, that motherhood and marriage do not limit ambition, and that a woman can be graceful and powerful at the same time.”

Being named a finalist was deeply moving. “It was more than a milestone – it was a deeply emotional affirmation. It felt like God saying, ‘Your story matters. Your voice belongs in this room.’ The experience has been both stretching and empowering. I can speak about gender-based violence, advocate for HIV/AIDS awareness, champion women and youth empowerment, and still embrace elegance and confidence without apology.”

For Pertunia, beauty carries responsibility. “I embody beauty with purpose by ensuring every platform I step on, every photo I post, every event I attend reflects the causes I stand for: trauma awareness, healing, gender-based violence, and human trafficking. True beauty is a woman who has been broken but chose to heal – and now uses her scars to build safe spaces for others.”

Her previous pageant journey taught her lessons in perspective. “Not every closed door is a failure – some are redirections. That previous experience didn’t break my confidence – it built resilience. This time, I am driven by purpose. I understand preparation is emotional, spiritual, and strategic. I value the process more than the spotlight.”

Balancing advocacy, public appearances, and personal healing requires discipline. “I prioritize my well-being with the same commitment I give to voting drives and campaigns. Boundaries, reflection, therapy-informed tools, and quiet time keep me centered. Trauma-informed care means modeling what I teach: resting, seeking support, and honoring emotional limits.”

Community support is critical. “Soweto raised me. When my community rallies behind me – voting, sharing, encouraging – it feels like validation that my journey represents something bigger than myself. Their support is about belief, unity, and inspiring the next generation. A young girl in Soweto can see me and think, ‘If she can, so can I.’”

Being a married woman in public life comes with challenges. “Society often expects us to ‘settle,’ to prioritize family over purpose. I’ve overcome these challenges by grounding myself in purpose and discipline. Faith and reflection have been my anchors. Being a married woman has become a strength, not a limitation.”

Her message to women and youth is simple: “Your story is not your limitation – it is your power. Healing is possible, resilience is within you, and your voice matters more than you realize. Step into it boldly – the world needs your light.”

Looking ahead, Pertunia dreams of international representation, expanding her foundation, and growing advocacy work. She urges young women to act now. “Start where you are, with what you have, and don’t wait for permission. Small, consistent actions build credibility, confidence, and momentum. Your voice matters. Your courage can spark a ripple effect that changes lives. My journey doesn’t end with a crown; it continues in the lives I touch and the change I help create.”

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RAYAASHA Singh

Miss Pre-Eminent SA 2026 overall winner

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#Pageant

Interview with Rayaasha Singh

Miss Pre-Eminent SA 2026 Overall Winner

A story by:
Etienne Vermaak

Rayaasha still remembers the girl she used to be. “I struggled with my self-esteem and faced bullying that made me feel small,” she says quietly. Today, she stands tall as a pageant title holder, but she says the journey started as something deeply personal. “I stepped onto the pageant stage because I wanted to challenge that story about myself.

I saw pageantry as a masterclass in confidence and public speaking.” Over time, what began as a search for self-assurance grew into something bigger. “Now it’s about being an advocate for people who feel unheard,” Rayaasha explains.

For Rayaasha, the hardest part of competing was not the gowns or the interviews, but her own thoughts. “The biggest challenge was the battle with nerves and self-doubt,” she admits. “I knew I had potential, but unlocking it took a huge shift in mindset.” There were tears and moments of frustration after setbacks. “I learned that passion isn’t enough. You have to match it with serious hard work.” She says she started treating every mistake as a lesson. “I showed up earlier and worked harder until my preparation outweighed my fear.”

Holding a title, Rayaasha says, comes with real responsibility. “It’s about being a positive influence in the community. It’s more than appearances. It’s about showing up and doing the work.” Balancing her role with her personal life takes planning. “Time management and boundaries are everything. I’ve learned that leadership means knowing when to push and when to rest so you can give your best every day.”

The change in her confidence has been clear. “Public speaking used to feel impossible,” Rayaasha says with a smile. “Now I actually enjoy connecting with people and sharing my story.” She believes pageantry helped her let go of fear. “I stopped worrying so much about being judged and started focusing on being heard. I realized my voice has value.” One moment still stands out. “Being announced as the Category Overall Winner for Miss Pre-eminent SA was unforgettable,” she says. “Every doubt I had ever fought and every hour of hard work came rushing back.” She paused, overwhelmed by the memory. “I cried because I had finally proven to myself that I belonged there. The girl who once hid was now standing in the spotlight as a champion.”

Rayaasha is passionate about mental health, especially among young people. “I want to help create a culture where talking about mental health is as normal as treating a physical injury,” she says. She speaks about the importance of support lines and open conversations. “No child should feel like they have to face their battles alone.”

Preparing for pageants takes more than just practice on stage. “It’s a mix of technical training and emotional support,” Rayaasha explains. She worked closely with her coach, Hanlie, on everything from her walk to stage presence. At home, her support system kept her grounded. “My mom Anusha sent me motivational messages every day, reminding me of my worth. My boyfriend Keano always reminded me of my strength. Their belief in me helped me walk onto that stage with confidence.”

When asked how she defines beauty, Rayaasha doesn’t hesitate. “Beauty is the courage to be yourself,” she says. She believes pageants have changed. “We’re not just looking at a face anymore. We’re looking at a woman’s heart, intelligence, and dedication to her community.”

Her advice to young people thinking about pageants is simple. “Bring your heartbeat, not just a mannequin,” Rayaasha says with a laugh. “Work on your mind as much as your walk. Compete with who you were yesterday. The confidence you gain is more important than any trophy.” Rayaasha uses her platform to connect people with help. “I see my title as a bridge between those who need support and the resources that can change their lives,” she says. She focuses on normalizing conversations around mental health. “I want to be relatable, not just reachable. This year is about real impact, not a perfect image.”

She also wants to clear up common myths. “People think pageants are just pretty faces and expensive dresses,” Rayaasha says. “If they saw behind the scenes, they’d see the discipline, the tears, and the growth. The crown is just an accessory. The real prize is confidence and leadership.”

Behind the curtain, she says, the experience is emotional and intense. “There are tears of exhaustion, relief after tough interviews, and joy when a friend nails their walk,” Rayaasha shares. “You think you’re training for a stage, but you’re really training for life.”

Her journey has not been without setbacks. “I went through a dark period with my confidence and realized I needed to take care of myself,” she says. “I took a break and focused on healing. That reset taught me that you can’t pour from an empty cup.” She returned stronger, with a new perspective. “Strength doesn’t come from perfection. It comes from getting back up.”

Looking ahead, Rayaasha has big dreams. “I want to step onto the Miss South Africa stage and one day represent my country at Miss Universe,” she says. She also hopes to enter high fashion. “I dream of walking for brands like Versace, Armani, and Dolce & Gabbana.” For Rayaasha, the goal is to combine purpose and style. “I want to use every stage I walk on to inspire others to dream big.”

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Teaghan Wafer

PPMC MAGAZINE ISSUE 163

Creativity and Confidence

Instagram: @withteaghan_ & @teaghanwafer
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#Inspire

Interview with Teaghan Wafer

Owner of Styled with Teaghan

Teaghan Wafer speaks about fashion the way some people speak about music or first love — with warmth, certainty, and a sense that it has always been part of her life. At 22, Teaghan is already carving out her space as an image consultant and designer, driven by a belief that style is deeply personal and powerfully transformative.

“Fashion has been a part of who I am for as long as I can remember,” Teaghan says with a smile. “I always joke that my love for it started the day I was born.” For Teaghan, clothing is never just fabric stitched together. “Style is a way to express your personality, creativity, and confidence without even speaking,” she explains. “When someone feels good in what they’re wearing, it shows in everything they do.”

That passion led Teaghan across the world in 2022, when she was given the opportunity to study in the United Kingdom. It was a life-changing step, one she does not take lightly. “It was such a major honour,” Teaghan says. “I will forever be grateful that I could step outside of my comfort zone and my small town to chase my big dreams.”

Teaghan is quick to credit her family for that leap. “My parents have always been our biggest supporters,” she says, referring to herself and her sisters. “They gave us the world through their love, sacrifices, and constant encouragement. Studying overseas was a huge blessing, and I have them to thank for that.” She adds, “Their support shaped who I am today. I carry those values with me in everything I do.”

Living and studying abroad expanded Teaghan’s view of fashion in ways she never expected. “Being exposed to different cultures while traveling around Europe and living in the UK completely changed how I see style,” she says. “I learned how environment, traditions, and everyday life influence what people wear.”

What stood out most to Teaghan was people’s freedom in how they dressed. “I loved how people expressed themselves and weren’t afraid to try different things,” she explains. “They weren’t just following trends or trying to fit into a box. That really inspired me.” The experience sharpened her creativity and gave her a stronger understanding of global fashion. “It still influences how I approach styling today,” she says.

Teaghan’s natural love for fashion, paired with her desire to help others, led her toward image consulting. “I’ve always wanted to make a positive difference in people’s lives,” she says. “When I realized I could do that through style and confidence, everything just clicked. I feel so certain that this is the path I’m meant to be on.”

Her professional training with SA Image Academy helped turn that calling into a career. “Studying through SA Image has been a dream come true,” Teaghan says. “I’ve learned so much, not just about styling, but about empowering people. The team really changed my life and gave me the tools to help others feel beautiful and confident.”

For Teaghan, confidence and style are closely connected. “Outer appearance isn’t everything, but it does affect how we feel,” she says. “When we dress well, we feel good. It’s not about expensive clothes or chasing every trend. It’s about wearing what suits you, reflects your personality, and makes you feel like the best version of yourself.”

Teaghan often works with clients who struggle with self-image, something she speaks about with deep compassion. “With the harsh beauty standards placed on society in our day and age, many clients struggle with different insecurities that limit them from being confident,” Teaghan says.

She believes much of this pressure is linked to how people view natural changes in their bodies. “As our bodies change, we are made to believe that we are flawed, and this leads to negative self-talk,” she explains. Through her work, Teaghan focuses on shifting that mindset. “As a passionate image consultant, I will work with clients to break down these barriers, showing them the importance of appreciating their bodies and natural beauty,” she says.

For Teaghan, those changes tell a meaningful story rather than something to hide. “By acknowledging that as our bodies change, a greater story is being told, it proves we are living a fulfilled life full of love, great experiences, and happiness.”

Describing her own style, Teaghan says it balances elegance with fun. “I love sophistication with a bit of pizzazz,” she laughs. “I’m drawn to vintage-inspired pieces that feel like they have a story. I also enjoy experimenting because I like different elements from different style identities.”

When it comes to trends, Teaghan prefers timeless over temporary. “I’m loving classic pieces, lace, and detailed garments that stand out,” she says. “But I always tell people not to follow every micro trend. Those come and go so quickly. Choose styles that truly align with who you are.”

For anyone unsure where to begin, Teaghan suggests starting simple. “Start with what you love,” she says. “A capsule wardrobe is a great way to build outfits that are easy, practical, and still feel like you. It’s about choosing better, not just owning more.”

Looking ahead, Teaghan hopes to grow her own business and make a meaningful impact in South Africa’s fashion and image industry. “I want to uplift people and help them feel valued and confident,” she says. “Fashion is such a powerful space for self-expression and culture. It should be celebrated.”

Above all, Teaghan wants people to remember one thing. “Confidence is always in style,” she says. “Sometimes it’s already there inside you. You might just need a little help to bring it out.”

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Face of PPMC Mag 2025
Senior Overall Winner
Face of PPMC Mag 2025
Best Eyes 1st Runner-
Face of PPMC Mag 2025
Best Smile 1st Runner
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Mrs. Winner
Face of PPMC Mag 2025
Best Black & White Winner

#Inspire

Cover Model Charlene Kleynhans

Face of PPMC Magazine 2025 Overall Winner

When Charlene Kleynhans entered Face of PPMC Magazine 2025, she did not walk in with a plan to win. She walked in with purpose. Months later, she stood as the Overall Winner and cover model, with standout wins across several categories. For Charlene, the moment was deeply personal.

“Winning those titles was a complete surprise and an incredible honour,” Charlene says. “I entered Face of PPMC Magazine for the opportunity and the meaningful platform it represents, not with expectations of winning.”

For Charlene, being a senior and Mrs entrant made the recognition even more significant. “More than a title or a cover, the moment felt like affirmation that a woman’s story doesn’t lose power with age, it gains depth,” she explains. “PPMC created space where maturity, confidence, and purpose could stand proudly alongside beauty.” She adds that the platform amplified her voice in a way that felt authentic to her life. “Motherhood doesn’t pause your dreams; it becomes part of the journey.” Her decision to enter Mrs Universe South Africa followed a similar pattern. Encouraged by a friend, Charlene took time before committing. “I spent time in prayer, asking for clarity,” she says. “What followed was a sense of peace and excitement.” Having her husband’s support mattered deeply. “His belief in me gave me the confidence to say yes.”

What began as a pageant journey quickly became something more meaningful. Charlene went on to place in the Top 5/Top 4, earned the Public Choice award in the semi-finals, and stood proudly at coronation. But for her, it was never only about placement. “Each milestone felt less about competition and more about being exactly where God wanted me to be,” she says. “The Public Choice support affirmed that not only do people resonate with me, but with what I stand for.”

Out of this journey grew her advocacy campaign, #EmpowerHerMind - CrownHerHeart. The theme was not crafted in a boardroom. It was born at home. “As a mother to three daughters, I’m constantly aware of how words and role models shape a young girl’s confidence and sense of worth,” Charlene says. “I’ve seen how easily kindness can be replaced by comparison.”

She speaks openly about the pressure women carry. “Women often carry the weight of expectations while quietly doubting themselves,” she says. “This theme became my way of reminding girls and women that confidence begins in the mind and is sustained by a heart rooted in compassion.” Through school visits, conversations, and online engagement, she has already seen impact.

“I’ve seen this message spark meaningful conversations and give women the confidence to speak up, show up, and support one another.”

Education plays a central role in Charlene's mission. "I have always believed that education is the path to success," she says. Over time, as she reflected on real solutions to domestic violence and abuse, one answer kept returning. "Education equips people with awareness, language, and choice," she explains. "When people understand their worth and recognise unhealthy patterns, the cycle can be challenged and, over time, broken."

Her work with the Hoopstad Library children's section upgrade and the Teacher Planner from Sisters & Journals reflects that belief. "The Teacher Planner was designed because my sister is an educator," Charlene says. "We recognised a real gap in the tools available to support teachers." Supporting the library project was equally intentional. "Creating safe, fun, and nurturing spaces where children can learn, imagine, and grow matters to me."

Charlene's community involvement stretches wide. She has organised the Kroon van Bloemhof Pageant, delivered Typek Christmas Boxes to more than 400 children, supported school drives, and worked alongside SANBS blood drives. Yet the project closest to her heart is her health-awareness advocacy.

"This includes raising awareness around cancer, particularly the journey of Zoey, a four-year-old little girl battling leukemia," Charlene says. She also speaks about organ donation, hemochromatosis, diabetes, thyroid conditions, and breast cancer. "These are not distant causes, but realities affecting people in my community, my family, myself, and my closest friends." What moves her most is the quiet feedback. "When someone reaches out to say, 'I went for a check-up because of your post,' I'm reminded that impact begins through honest storytelling and compassion."

As a Cupcakes of Hope Ambassador and an advocate against gender-based violence, Charlene weaves awareness into her daily decisions. "In pageantry and in business, I choose messages and partnerships that uplift and educate," she says. "Awareness and healing are woven through intention, kindness, and responsible use of visibility." Her entrepreneurial journey through Sisters & Journals reflects that same mindset. "Sisters & Journals is built on passion and dreams," Charlene explains. "It was created to bring structure and clarity to the lives of mothers, women, and teachers who juggle many roles." Looking ahead, she plans to expand into health, well-being, and digital products. "We want to create tools that feel fresh and relevant, while staying true to the heart of Sisters & Journals."

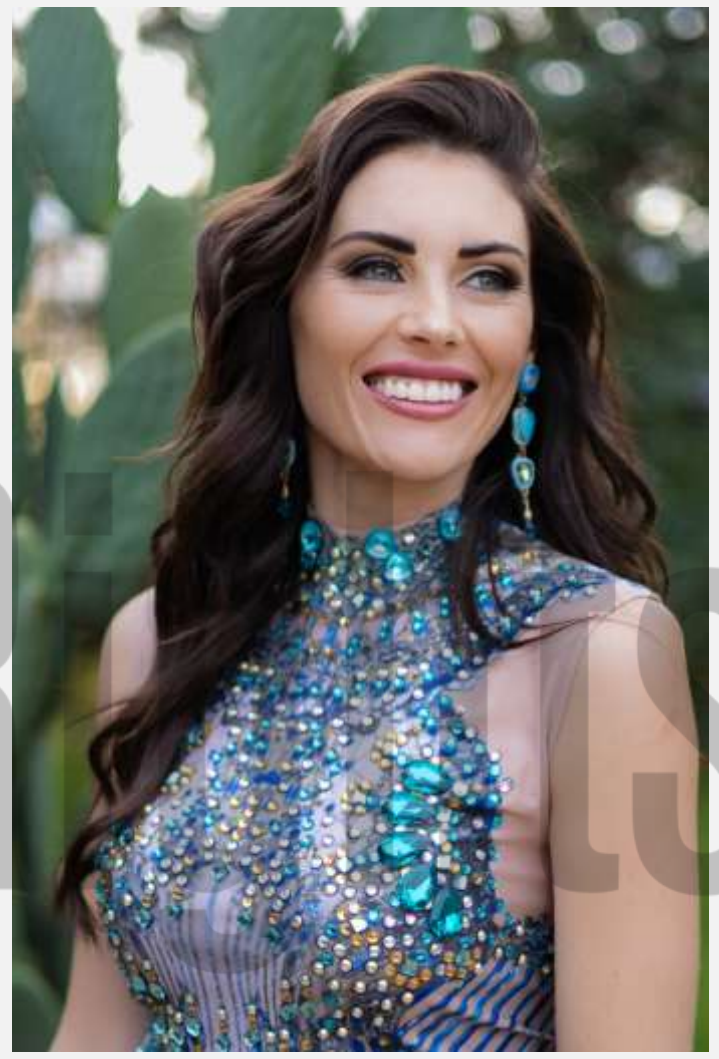
Brand partnerships are chosen carefully. Charlene works with GlamGirl Accessories, Kryolan Northern Cape, KC Cloths, I Manage Risk, Elize Pretorius Realty, and Petals and Bows. "I start with people before products," she says. "Many of these relationships began as friendships." Supporting women-led small businesses is especially meaningful to her. "Purpose and business can grow together."

At home, Charlene is a farmer's wife and mother of three. Balance, she says, is seasonal. "It isn't about doing everything perfectly at the same time. It's about knowing what matters most in each season." Rural family life keeps her grounded. "Self-care is found in quiet mornings, routine, coffee with a friend, and time with my family." Recognition such as Most Influential Woman and Inspirational Woman of the Year nominations are received with gratitude. "They are opportunities rather than goals," she says. "They help open doors to conversations where advocacy and community upliftment can reach more people."

Charlene dreams of expanding her impact, mentoring young girls in pageantry, and possibly embracing international representation. "My focus remains on growth with purpose," she says. "If international representation becomes part of that journey, I will welcome it with gratitude."

For women who feel overwhelmed but want to make a difference, Charlene keeps her advice simple. "I started by simply showing up as myself," she says. "You don't need to see the full picture to begin. Start with what's already in your hands."

She smiles as she reflects on how far she has come. "Sometimes you simply start as yourself, and purpose finds you along the way."



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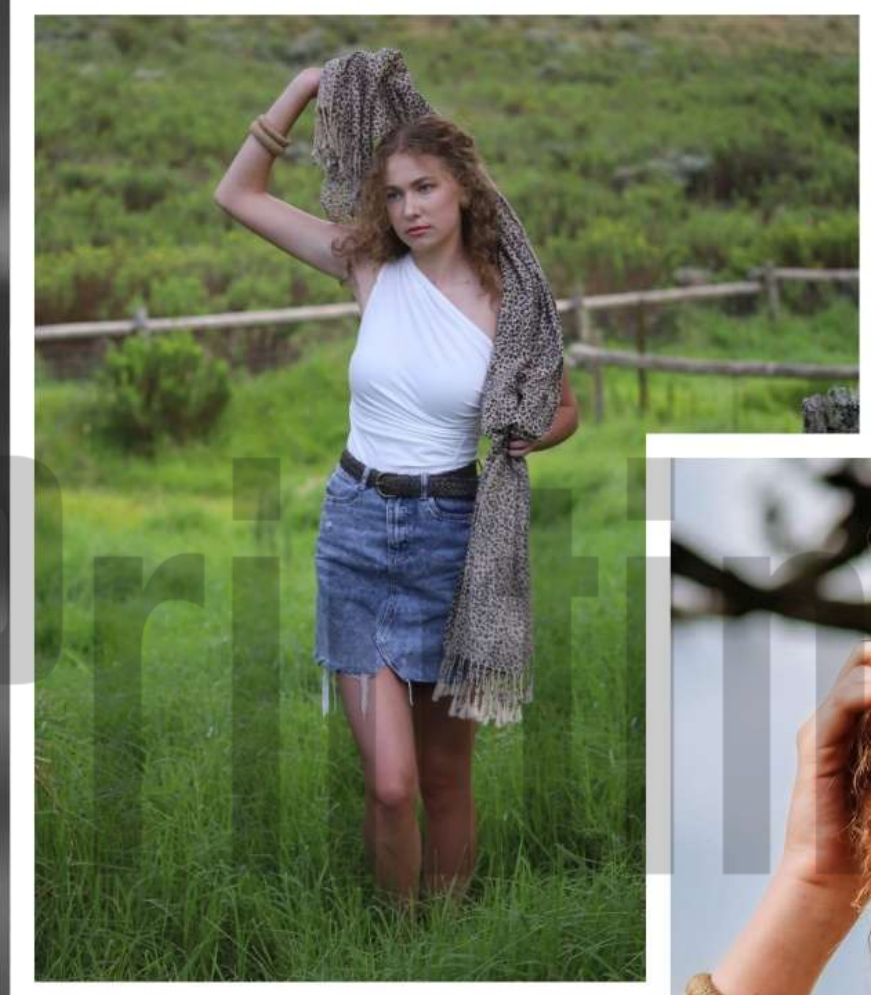

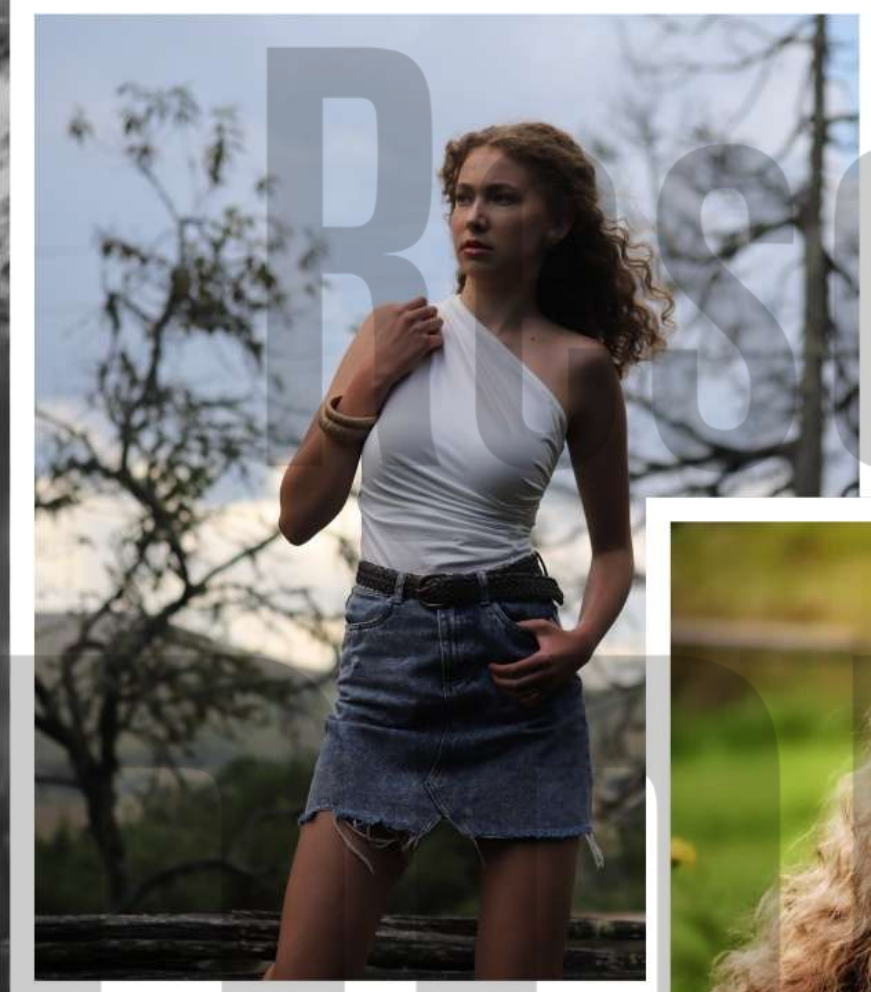

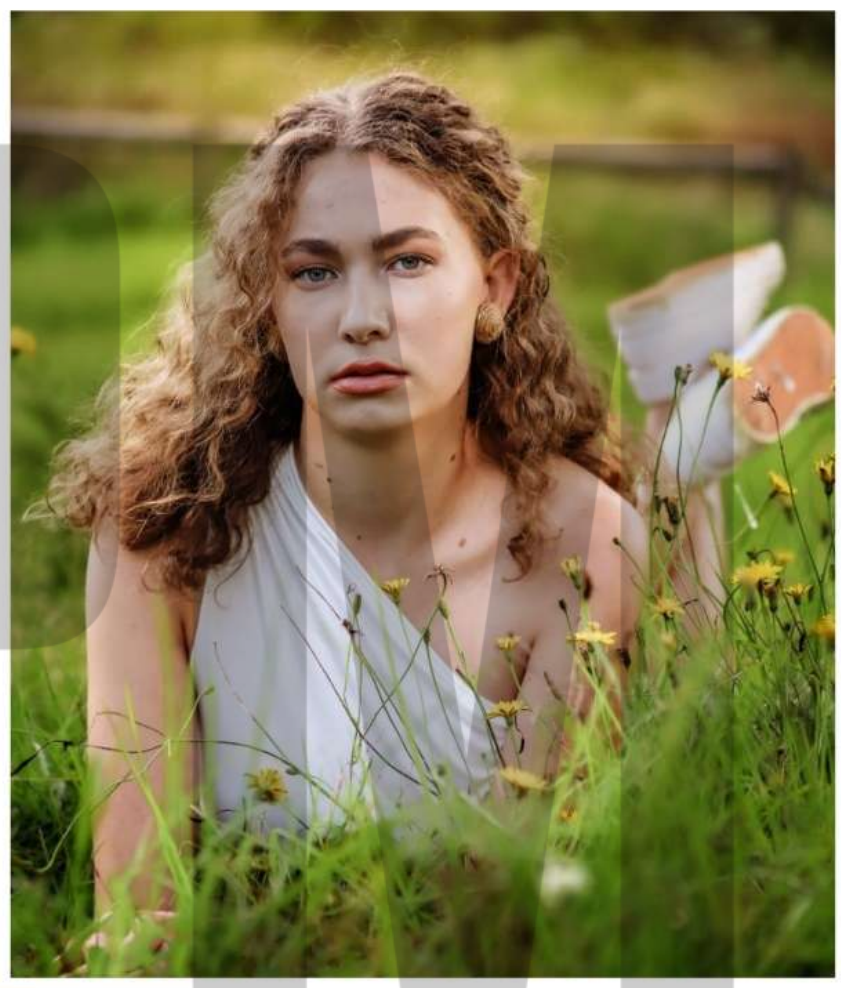

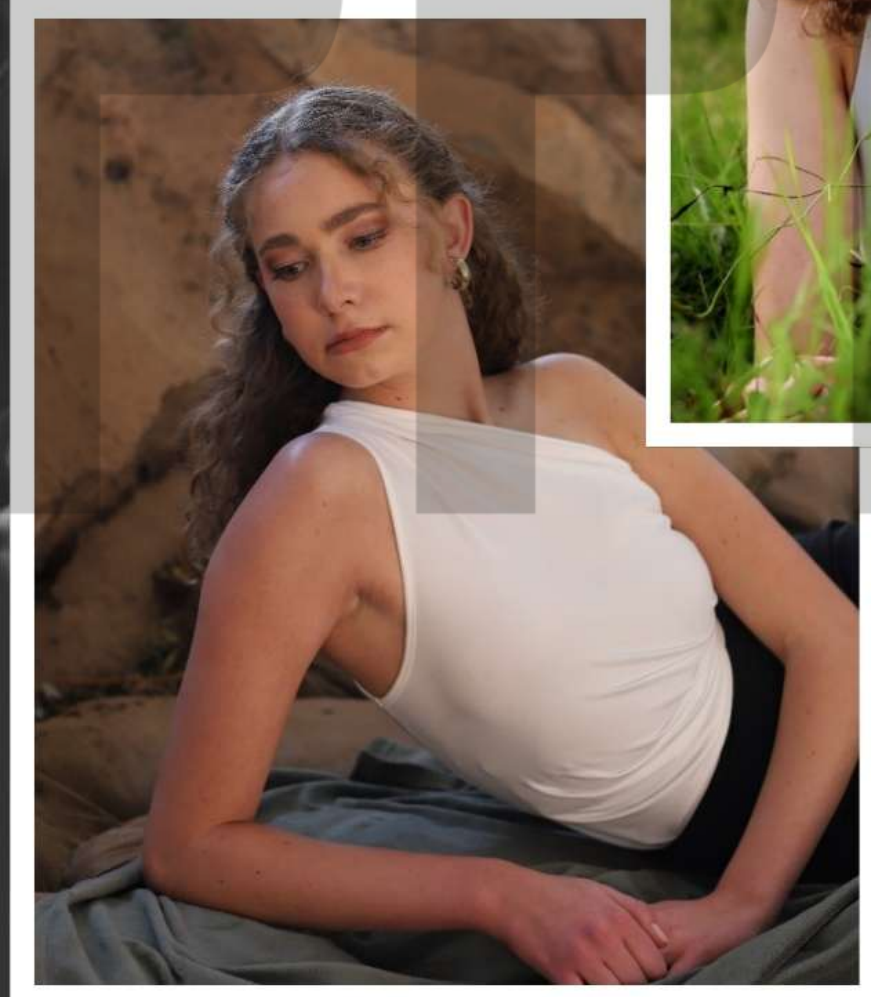

Private Gallery
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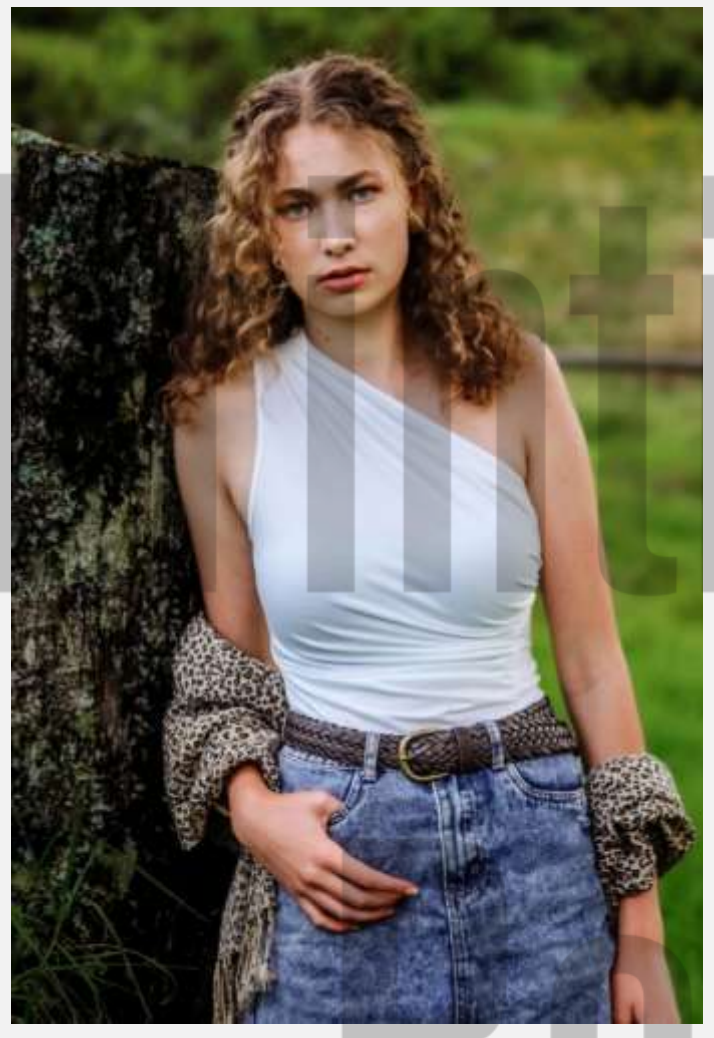
#Model

Interview with Danél Byleveldt

From Small Town to Spotlight



Danél Byleveldt is a young model from the small town of Lydenburg in Mpumalanga who is quickly making her mark in the modeling world. Her journey only began in 2025, but her progress already shows what can happen when passion meets determination.

Danél says she did not always plan on becoming a model. “After trying many sports, I saw one of my dear friends doing modeling, which looked very interesting, so I decided to join the journey and ended up loving it,” she explains. What started as simple curiosity soon became something much bigger.

Her natural growth did not go unnoticed. When her modeling teacher began to see her improvement, Danél was given the chance to prepare for the Mpumalanga Provincials. “It felt amazing to know that I had made so much progress in such a short time, and I was very excited to prepare for provincials,” she says.

Competing at the provincial level opened her eyes to the bigger modeling industry. “It was such an amazing experience at the provincials. It was an opportunity to learn new things, meet new people, grow, and build your confidence. It opened more doors for me,” Danél shares. The event helped her see that modeling is not just about appearance, but also about confidence, discipline, and learning from others.

One of the proudest moments of her journey came when she was selected to represent Mpumalanga at the South African Championships. “It was a proud and emotional moment for me. It felt like all the hard work was being paid off. At that moment I realized this isn’t just for me but for everyone who supported me throughout my journey,” she says. Representing her province gave her a new sense of responsibility. “It motivated me to work even harder knowing that I had the honour of representing my province.”

The national stage also taught her an important life lesson. “One important lesson I learned is to not give up. Even after losing, there will always be another win,” she says with maturity beyond her years.

Another unforgettable moment came when Anastasia Gai from RStar Productions selected Danél for the Paris Bootcamp. “I felt amazing knowing that out of so many models, I stood out. It felt like a dream come true, being seen by such an incredible person,” she says. The news that she would be traveling overseas left her speechless. “I was in so much shock. It was something I didn’t really expect would happen to me, especially in my first year of modeling.”

Looking ahead, Danél is eager for the experience in Paris. “I’m excited to learn new tips and tricks,” she says. She believes this opportunity will shape her future in a big way. “It will definitely be a turning point in my journey. It is opening doors to global exposure, new industry standards, and getting the chance to learn from professionals from around the world. It will challenge me to grow not only as a model but as a person.” Like many young people chasing big dreams, Danél has faced challenges. “My biggest challenge was being judged by people with higher expectations,” she admits. Instead of letting it break her confidence, she changed her mindset. “I learned to overcome it by telling myself I’m not doing this for anyone but myself.”

Behind her stands a strong support system. “My mom, dad, grandparents, and my coach Siska Pienaar from Models Beyond have been motivating and supporting me from the beginning,” she says gratefully.

Balancing school and modeling is another important part of her life, especially with matric coming up. “My modeling classes are in the afternoon, so I make sure that my schoolwork is done before classes so I don’t need to worry about catching up. At night, when my homework is done, I go through everything I learned in class,” she explains. Her routine shows that discipline plays a big role in her success.

When asked what kind of model she hopes to become, Danél does not limit herself. “I hope to become a runway, commercial, and international model,” she says with a smile.

To other young people who dream of modeling, Danél offers heartfelt advice. “The journey isn’t always going to be easy. There will be moments of doubt and challenges, but those feelings and challenges will help you grow stronger. Just get through them and don’t give up on your dream.

Stay true to yourself and remember you are doing it for yourself. Don’t compare your journey to anyone else. Your uniqueness is your biggest blessing. No dream is ever too big if you work on it.”

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Tshepang Montsho

Beauty With Purpose Advocate Breaking Barriers On National Stage Inspiring Self Love

Facebook:Tshepang Tshepi Montsho
Instagram: @Tshepiiblack_

#Finalist

Interview with Tshepang Montsho

Miss Grand South Africa Finalist

Tshepang Montsho speaks with calm confidence and quiet strength, a woman who knows exactly why she is standing where she is today. A Miss Grand South Africa finalist and the reigning Miss Rustenburg 2024, Tshepang is a model, a mental health advocate, and a proud woman living with alopecia universalis. She is from Rustenburg, a place she credits for grounding her journey in self-love, authenticity, and purpose.

"I am Miss Rustenburg 2024, a model, mental health advocate, and a proud woman living with alopecia universalis," Tshepang says. "My journey is deeply rooted in self-love, authenticity, and purpose." It is a journey that has brought her onto one of the country's biggest pageant stages, not to blend in, but to stand out honestly.

Being selected as a Miss Grand South Africa finalist is a moment Tshepang describes as deeply emotional. "This achievement means everything to me because it validates my belief that being authentic is powerful," she says. For Tshepang, the title is not just about a crown or a sash. It is about representation. "It tells every person who feels 'different' that they, too, belong on big stages."

Her decision to enter Miss Grand South Africa was intentional. Tshepang knew her message had outgrown the borders of her hometown. "I entered because my advocacy goes beyond one town," she explains. "I want to take the self-love and mental health movement to the world, and this platform allows me to reach more hearts, more ears, and more lives."

When she heard she had been selected as a finalist, Tshepang says the moment stayed with her long after the announcement. "I felt emotional, grateful, and affirmed," she shares. "It was a reminder that staying true to yourself will always open the right doors." It was also a moment that confirmed that her voice matters, just as it is.

Through the competition, Tshepang has learned more about herself than she expected. "I've learned that I am stronger than I think, braver than I feel, and capable of leading with both softness and strength," she says. Most importantly, she has come to understand that her story is not accidental. "I've also learned that my story has purpose."

Tshepang believes that what has carried her this far is not perfection, but honesty. "My authenticity, consistency, faith, and willingness to show up as myself have helped me reach this stage," she says. "I don't pretend to fit into a box. I believe people connect with truth." That belief has shaped how she presents herself both on and off the pageant stage.

If she were to take the Miss Grand South Africa title, Tshepang knows exactly what she would stand for. "I am most passionate about promoting self-love, mental health awareness, and authenticity," she says. Her focus is especially on young women. "I want them to know that their worth is not defined by appearance or society's standards."

Some moments along the way have left a lasting mark. Being crowned Miss Rustenburg 2024 remains one of her most emotional memories. "That moment will always stay with me," Tshepang says. But stepping into Miss Grand South Africa has carried a different kind of weight. "Knowing I am carrying a bigger mission has been incredibly powerful."

Outside of pageantry, Tshepang's heart is firmly rooted in service. She enjoys modeling, but she also spends time working with children, uplifting communities, mentoring young girls, and creating safe spaces where people can speak openly about mental health. These are not side projects for her, but part of who she is.

Balancing pageant commitments with personal life requires intention. "Balance comes from discipline, prayer, and remembering my 'why,'" Tshepang explains. She plans her time carefully and allows herself kindness when things feel overwhelming. "I give myself grace," she says simply.

Support has played a major role in her journey. Tshepang speaks warmly of her family, especially the strong women who surround her. She also draws strength from her community and from people she has never met. "Even strangers who see themselves in my story have supported me," she says.

When asked what makes a successful finalist, Tshepang lists qualities that go beyond the stage. "Authenticity, humility, emotional intelligence, and a heart for service," she says. For newcomers to pageantry, her advice is clear and honest. "Enter as yourself. Don't shrink or change to fit expectations. Your uniqueness is your biggest advantage."

Looking ahead, Tshepang's goals are rooted in impact. In pageantry, she wants to continue using her platform to touch lives in meaningful ways. In her personal life, she aims to grow her advocacy work globally, expand her organization, and continue living her truth.

"Loving yourself fully is a revolutionary act," Tshepang says, and it is a message she carries with pride wherever she goes.

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Nadia Mosoete

#Finalist

Interview with Nadia Mosoete

Limpopo Model Search 2026 Finalist

At just 16 years old, Nadia is already learning how to stand tall in spaces that can feel intimidating even for adults. The Grade 11 learner from Seshego Zone 2 in Polokwane, Limpopo, is a finalist in the Limpopo Model Search 2026, and she sees the journey as more than a competition. For Nadia, it is a platform for growth, courage, and self-belief.

"I believe that every step I take is an opportunity to inspire, and every challenge is a chance for personal growth," Nadia says with quiet confidence.

Nadia describes herself as a natural leader with a creative mind. Still, when she first received the news that she had been selected as a finalist, her reaction was not confidence, but shock. "I was overwhelmed and honestly in disbelief," she admits. "We live in a world with unrealistic beauty standards, and I did not always see myself fitting into that."

Instead of letting those doubts hold her back, Nadia made a decision that would shape her journey. "I chose to take part in the competition because I see it as the foundation of my confidence and self-discovery journey," she explains. "Modeling is not just about appearance. It is also about growth, creativity, and how you carry yourself."

Although she only recently stepped into the modeling world, Nadia says the experience has already changed her in many ways. She speaks about improved social skills, better communication, and a stronger sense of self. "I have learned how to present myself, how to walk with purpose, and how to speak with confidence," she says. "All of that has helped me grow as a person, not just as a model."

One of the parts she enjoys most is the discipline the competition has taught her. "The daily practice, the morning routines, and even repeating my introduction over and over have helped me become more focused," Nadia says. "It has shown me that success comes from consistency."

Her journey has not been without challenges. Nadia is open about her struggle with procrastination. "Sometimes I knew I had to complete certain tasks to secure more votes, but I would delay," she says honestly. "I missed chances to socialize more and come up with better strategies. That is something I am still working on."

Despite that, the competition has pushed her out of her comfort zone in positive ways. Nadia describes herself as naturally reserved, but she has learned to approach people with confidence. "I have started talking to people both online and offline, asking for votes and thanking them for their support," she says. "It helped me improve my verbal communication skills a lot."

When Nadia looks ahead in the modeling industry, she sees herself in both commercial and runway spaces. "I love the idea of promoting products because I enjoy connecting with people," she says. "But I am also drawn to runway modeling. I believe I have the physical qualities that suit that platform."

Behind her growing confidence stands a strong support system, especially her mother. Nadia speaks about her with deep gratitude. "My mother has been there for me through everything," she says. "She comforted me when I felt discouraged and guided me when things felt difficult. She made sure I had what I needed and reminded me that no one is perfect when they are just starting."

Nadia has also discovered that modeling is built on teamwork, not rivalry. "It is not just about walking alone," she explains. "Models help each other, correct mistakes, and learn together. That makes the environment supportive instead of discouraging."

Before stepping onto a runway or into a photoshoot, Nadia has a personal ritual. "I do self-affirmations," she says with a smile. "I remind myself of what I am capable of. It helps remove self-doubt and brings back my confidence."

She believes her openness about her struggles is part of what makes her stand out. "I am not afraid to admit when I feel vulnerable," Nadia says. "I use my struggles as stepping stones for growth. Many finalists are talented, but I believe my leadership qualities and my desire to inspire others make me different."

Outside of modeling, Nadia remains focused on her education. "Academics are still very important to me," she says. "This opportunity is opening doors to agencies and brands, but it also shows that I can balance talent with discipline."

Her dreams stretch far beyond local stages. "I want global recognition," Nadia says. "I want to be admired not only for how I look, but for the influence I have. I want to inspire change, work with luxury brands, and one day be on the cover of magazines like Vogue."

To other young people who may be afraid to enter competitions, Nadia offers heartfelt advice. "It is okay to feel scared," she says. "But these experiences can grow your confidence, expand your potential, and open many opportunities, even financial independence. You just have to be brave enough to try."

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#Inspire

Interview with Esramé Pelser

Driven by Discipline and Purpose

At 40, Esramé is still chasing growth with the same hunger she had when she first stepped into a gym. From Bloemfontein, Esramé describes herself as "disciplined, driven, passionate, and purpose-led," and it shows in every part of her life. Fitness is not just a routine for Esramé. "I live and breathe fitness," Esramé says. "But more than that, I'm deeply passionate about growth — mentally, physically, and professionally."

Esramé has been competing since 2016, but the decision to step on stage for the first time came from a deeply personal place. "My initial motivation came from a desire to challenge myself beyond what felt comfortable or familiar," Esramé explains.

"Fitness was already a huge part of my life, but stepping on stage felt like the ultimate test of discipline, self-belief, and consistency. I wanted to see how far I could push my body and my mindset — and once I committed, there was no turning back." Thinking back to those early Bikini and Fitness Model days, Esramé remembers a season filled with emotion and steep learning curves. "What stands out most is how raw and intense that first season was," Esramé says.

"I was still learning my body, learning the sport, and learning myself. Everything felt overwhelming but exciting at the same time — the nerves, the preparation, the strict routines. It taught me humility very early on and showed me how much more there was to learn."

Her breakthrough came in 2017, a year that changed how Esramé saw herself as an athlete. With multiple titles and an international placing, the hard work began to feel worth it. "2017 was a turning point," Esramé says. "It validated the sacrifices and long hours and showed me that I truly belonged on competitive stages. More importantly, it built self-trust. I learned that if I committed fully and stayed disciplined, I could perform at a high level — even internationally."

One of the proudest moments of Esramé's career was representing South Africa at the NABBA/WFF World Championships in Cyprus. "Competing in Cyprus was incredibly emotional," Esramé says.

"Standing on an international stage wearing South African colours was something I'll never forget. It gave me perspective — not just about the level of the sport globally, but about my own strength. It was a proud, humbling, and deeply motivating experience."

Reserved

As her body and mindset evolved, so did the divisions she competed in. Esramé moved into Sports Model and Athletic Figure, categories that better reflected her strength and build. “As I evolved physically and mentally, I felt drawn to divisions that better represented my natural structure, strength, and athleticism,” Esramé explains. “Sports Model and Athletic Figure allowed me to express a stronger, more powerful version of myself. It felt like coming home to my true identity as an athlete.”

Nearly a decade in the sport requires more than motivation. For Esramé, it comes down to purpose. “Consistency comes from purpose,” Esramé says. “Bodybuilding has never been about short-term results — it’s about mastery, self-respect, and growth. Even when motivation fades, discipline carries me through. I’ve also learned to fall in love with the process, not just the outcome.”

In 2025, Esramé earned her WFF Pro Card, a milestone that carried deep emotional weight. “Earning my WFF Pro Card was incredibly emotional,” Esramé says. “It represented years of sacrifice, setbacks, self-doubt, and perseverance. It wasn’t just a title — it was proof that staying true to your path, even when it’s hard, pays off. That moment made every struggle worth it.”

The impact of bodybuilding on Esramé’s life reaches far beyond the stage. “Bodybuilding has strengthened my mindset more than anything else in my life,” Esramé says. “It taught me patience, resilience, emotional control, and accountability. I’ve learned how to show up for myself on hard days — and that carries over into every area of my life, from business to relationships.”

Through her coaching platform, Fitness For Sanity, Esramé now helps others break through their own mental barriers. “I focus heavily on mindset,” Esramé explains. “I teach clients that progress starts mentally — not physically. We work on consistency, self-belief, and building habits that last. I guide them through discomfort with empathy, because I’ve been there myself. I don’t just coach bodies — I coach confidence.”

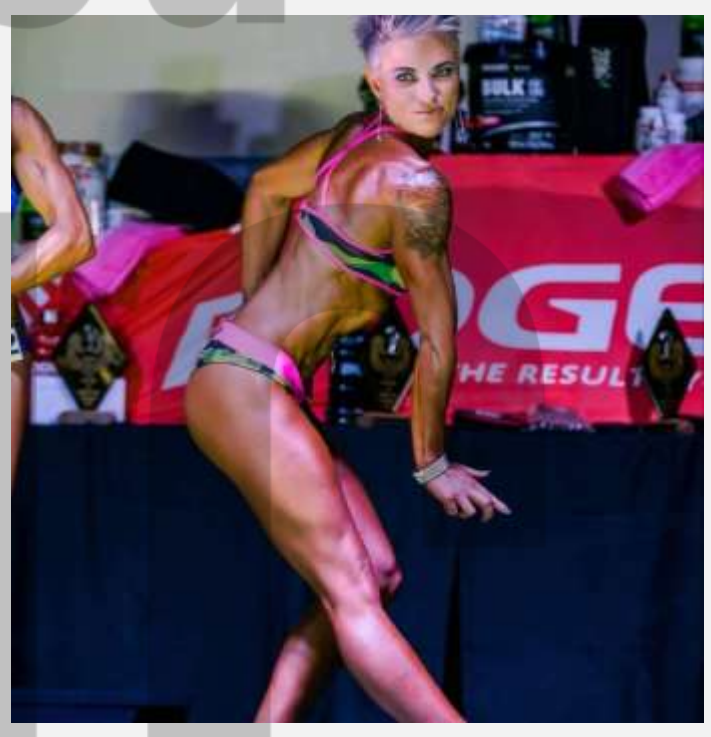
Esramé balances life as a Pro athlete, coach, and property practitioner with careful structure. “Structure and discipline are everything,” Esramé says. “I plan my days with intention and protect my energy by prioritizing what truly matters. Training, recovery, and mental health are non-negotiable for me. Balance doesn’t mean doing everything perfectly — it means doing the right things consistently.”

Working behind the scenes with the World Fitness Federation has also shaped her perspective. “Seeing the sport from the organizational side has given me deep respect for what goes into building fair, professional competitions,” Esramé says. “I’ve learned how much integrity, structure, and teamwork are required. It’s helped me become a better athlete by understanding judging criteria and expectations on a deeper level.”

For Esramé, the difference between a Pro and an amateur goes far beyond appearance. “Physically, it’s about refinement and consistency,” Esramé says. “Mentally, it’s about accountability and resilience. Pro athletes show up even when no one is watching. They don’t rely on motivation — they rely on discipline, structure, and long-term vision.”

Now preparing to compete internationally again in Germany in 2026, Esramé is entering a new phase of her career. “This next phase is about precision and longevity,” Esramé says. “I’m focusing more on recovery, strategic training, and mental clarity. As a Pro, it’s no longer about proving myself — it’s about refining my craft and representing my country and federation at the highest standard.”

For young athletes with big dreams, Esramé keeps her advice simple and honest. “Patience and self-belief,” Esramé says. “Success in bodybuilding doesn’t happen overnight. You must be willing to outlast discomfort, setbacks, and doubt. Stay consistent, trust the process, and remember — discipline will always take you further than motivation.”



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Lady EL Inspire Perfume

Elsibie Van Rooy

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#Inspire

Introducing Elsibie Van Rooy

LadyEL Inspire Perfume

From the small town of Hopetown to the national perfume scene, Elsibie Van Rooy is redefining what it means to wear confidence. Her brand, LadyEL Inspire Perfume, is more than a scent—it's a statement. "Growing up, I was always drawn to the smells around me," Elsibie says. "The markets, the flowers, the fresh air—it sparked my curiosity about fragrances."

Her love for scents led her to study chemistry and design, skills she would later combine to create LadyEL Inspire. "I wanted to design a perfume that blends elegance with confidence," she explains. "It's about inspiring anyone who wears it, giving them a feeling of strength and sophistication."

The signature fragrance tells the story of Elsibie's roots and vision. "I blended Hopetown's citrus and floral aromas with exotic spices," she says. "The top notes are bergamot, the heart is jasmine, and the base is sandalwood and vanilla. Every element is meant to represent grace and power."

LadyEL Inspire is more than just perfume. "It's about self-expression and empowerment," Elsibie says. "It encourages women and men to embrace who they truly are. Wearing it is a reminder to be bold, to be yourself." The road hasn't been without challenges. "As a woman in business, I faced skepticism and struggled to secure funding," Elsibie admits. "I overcame it by building a strong brand story, connecting with supportive communities, and showing the quality of my products."

Her mission is clear: inspire confidence in everyone. "LadyEL Inspire isn't just for women," she says. "It's for anyone who wants to lead with authenticity. It's about celebrating personal strength and individuality."

Resilience and determination fuel Elsibie's journey. "Resilience is learning from setbacks," she says. "Determination is making sure your vision becomes reality. You have to keep pushing, keep growing, and keep believing."

Support from other women entrepreneurs has been key. "Community matters," she says. "Mentorship, shared advice, and encouragement from other women have guided me and given me confidence in my decisions."

A career milestone that stands out? "The first major retail partnership was incredible," Elsibie says. "Seeing LadyEL Inspire on national shelves validated all my work and showed me the brand's potential."

Balancing creativity, business strategy, and personal growth is part of her routine. "I combine artistic scent design with smart marketing," she explains. "I also focus on learning and self-reflection, so the brand grows alongside me."

Her advice to aspiring women entrepreneurs is both practical and motivating. "Trust your instincts and build a business that reflects your passion," she says. "Start small, test your ideas, and surround yourself with supportive mentors. Solve a real problem, manage your finances, and never stop learning. Celebrate every win, no matter how small."

In a crowded perfume industry, Elsibie ensures her brand stands out. "Tell a unique scent story," she says. "Use striking packaging, sustainable practices, and immersive experiences like pop-up scent lounges. Listen to your customers and keep refining your brand."

Looking ahead, Elsibie has ambitious plans. "We're launching limited-edition scents inspired by seasons and culture," she says. "We want to grow into new markets, expand online, use eco-friendly packaging, and connect with our community through storytelling campaigns."

When asked what message she wants her customers to take away, Elsibie doesn't hesitate. "Wear your confidence," she says. "Let every fragrance remind you of your strength and the courage to chase your dreams."

From a small Northern Cape town to creating a nationally recognized perfume brand, Elsibie Van Rooy proves that passion, creativity, and drive can turn a love of scent into something extraordinary. LadyEL Inspire isn't just perfume—it's empowerment in a bottle, designed for anyone ready to make their mark.

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Sinovia Atkinson

#Inspire

Interview with Sinovia Attwell

Where Business Meets Community Impact

Sinovia Attwell is making her mark as an entrepreneur, logistics professional, and community builder from Port Elizabeth. She balances a busy professional life with academic studies and meaningful community initiatives, all while inspiring others to follow their own paths.

“My name is Sinovia Attwell, and I’m an entrepreneur, logistics professional, and community builder from Port Elizabeth,” she says. “My journey began in logistics and supply chain management, where I developed a deep appreciation for structure, systems, and accountability. Over time, I realized that those same principles are powerful tools for entrepreneurship and community development.”

Her career took a new direction when she founded Ndlovukazi Specialist and co-founded the Ubuntu Civic Movement. “Ndlovukazi Specialist was born from a desire to professionalize skills development and outsourced training while creating opportunities within the SMME environment,” Sinovia explains. “The name Ndlovukazi reflects strength, leadership, and dignity — values I wanted embedded in everything we do.”

The Ubuntu Civic Movement was inspired by the idea that communities thrive when people work together. “Ubuntu reminds us that ‘I am because we are,’ and that philosophy guides our civic engagement and empowerment work,” she says.

Sinovia’s focus on youth empowerment is at the heart of her current projects, including the launch of a tutoring centre. “Education is the foundation of long-term empowerment. Through my work, I saw many children with potential but limited support structures. The tutoring centre is about more than academics — it’s about confidence, discipline, and preparing young people for life,” she says. “When you invest in a child’s development early, you change the trajectory of families and communities.” Her professional background in logistics gives her a unique approach to entrepreneurship. “Logistics teaches you planning, risk management, efficiency, and accountability — skills that are essential in entrepreneurship,” Sinovia explains. “Whether it’s managing training programmes, community projects, or educational initiatives, I apply supply-chain thinking to ensure sustainability, measurable outcomes, and continuous improvement.”

Sinovia also collaborates with Blessings Christian Academy on aftercare, school readiness, and self-defense programmes. “My hope is that these programmes create well-rounded, confident, and disciplined children,” she says. “Aftercare and school readiness provide stability for working families, while self-defense builds confidence and awareness. Collectively, these initiatives strengthen families and create safer, more resilient communities.” She is also an ambassador for Empower Afrique, working to expand skill development opportunities in local communities.

Managing all her commitments requires careful planning. “Balance comes from clear priorities, planning, and self-discipline. I treat my time like a supply chain — everything has a place, a purpose, and a timeline,” Sinovia says. “I’ve also learned that balance doesn’t mean doing everything at once; it means knowing when to focus and when to delegate.”

Her hard work has not gone unnoticed. Sinovia received the Empower Afrique Trailblazer Award, a recognition she describes as both humbling and motivating. “Personally, it affirmed that the work I do matters,” she says. “Professionally, it reinforced my responsibility to lead with integrity and to open doors for others. It wasn’t just a win for me — it was recognition of community-driven leadership.”

Her journey hasn’t been without challenges. “Logistics is still a male-dominated space, and entrepreneurship comes with its own hurdles. I’ve faced doubt, resistance, and the pressure to constantly prove myself,” Sinovia admits. “I overcame these challenges through competence, continuous learning, and resilience — letting my work speak louder than stereotypes.”

For Sinovia, empowerment means equipping people with the skills, confidence, and opportunity to succeed. “Through training, education, mentorship, and structured programmes, I focus on helping individuals become self-reliant rather than dependent,” she says. She believes essential qualities for aspiring entrepreneurs and logistics professionals include discipline, adaptability, integrity, problem-solving, and the willingness to keep learning.

Her certifications in Training and Development, TQM, and facilitation strengthen her leadership abilities. “These certifications allow me to design effective programmes, maintain quality standards, and facilitate learning in a way that’s practical and impactful,” she explains. “They strengthen my credibility and ensure that my leadership is both strategic and people-centred.” Sinovia draws inspiration from her husband Ricardo, resilient women, community leaders, and young people who rise despite adversity. “Faith, family, and community stories constantly remind me why I do this work,” she says.

When asked what advice she has for young women pursuing careers in business or logistics, she says: “Start where you are, learn relentlessly, and don’t shrink yourself to fit into spaces — own the room. You belong wherever competence and passion exist.”

Looking ahead, Sinovia plans to grow Ndlovukazi Specialist, expand her tutoring and youth development programmes, and strengthen civic engagement through Ubuntu. “Personal growth, for me, means staying grounded, purpose-driven, and impactful,” she says. “I want to continue developing as a leader who creates opportunities for others while making a real difference in my community.”

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Mikle Nkubungu

#Finalist

Interview with Mihle Nkubungu

Durban Model Search 2026 Finalist

Instagram: @_mihle_nkubungu

Mihle Nkubungu is a name that is quickly gaining attention in the South African modeling scene. At just 16 years old, Mihle has already made her mark as a finalist in the Durban Model Search 2026. Hailing from Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, she describes herself as goal-orientated and purposeful in everything she does. “I am someone who enjoys meeting new people, and I have quite an interest in anything related to current affairs,” she says.

When Mihle received the news that she had made it as a finalist, her excitement was clear. “I felt incredibly excited when I received the news,” she says. “I truly enjoy experiencing new and exciting opportunities, so hearing this was definitely something that stood out for me to start the new year. I was also excited to begin this journey because I believe something meaningful will blossom and open doors for me to showcase my love and passion for the modeling industry.”

Mihle explains that entering the Durban Model Search was a deliberate choice. “I took it upon myself to enter the competition with the hope of growing and learning more about what the industry expects from models,” she says. “I also wanted to embrace the journey and gain the experience of stepping outside of my comfort zone, especially when asking others to support me through voting. This process has taught me confidence, courage, and the importance of putting myself out there.”

Looking back on her journey, Mihle describes it as bittersweet. “There have been many happy memories and exciting moments, but there have also been challenging times,” she admits. “Through it all, I have learned to embrace every part of the experience, flawed or not, because each moment carries an important lesson. Every experience has helped me grow, and it has only made me stronger and more determined to continue pursuing my dreams.”

For Mihle, one of the most exciting aspects of the competition has been connecting with people through the voting process. “The most exciting part has definitely been posting and asking for votes,” she explains. “Through this, I have had the opportunity to socialise and connect with more people, especially when they ask questions about how to vote. It has also allowed me to engage more with my followers and has helped in creating a supportive community throughout this journey.”

Mihle believes that competitions like the Durban Model Search are more than just a chance to shine on stage. “A piece of advice I would give to any young person who feels nervous about entering competitions is simply to be yourself,” she says. “Find the courage within you to put yourself out there because you can never reach your true potential if you allow fear to hold you back. Stepping outside of your comfort zone is where growth truly happens. The most important thing is to believe in yourself, be confident, and remember that your truest form of beauty comes from within.”

Despite her young age, Mihle demonstrates maturity and focus beyond her years. She understands that modeling is not only about appearance but also about self-confidence, connecting with others, and embracing the learning process. “Every experience, good or bad, has contributed to my growth,” she says. “It has helped me become more determined and motivated to continue working towards my dreams.”

Mihle’s journey is still just beginning, but she is already building a strong foundation for her future in the modeling industry. She approaches every opportunity with enthusiasm and determination, eager to make the most of the experiences ahead. Her goal-orientated mindset is matched by her natural charm and ability to connect with people, qualities that she believes will take her far.

When asked about what she hopes to achieve, Mihle smiles and says, “I want to keep learning, improving, and embracing every opportunity that comes my way. Modeling is more than just a career; it’s a way to grow as a person and inspire others to follow their dreams too.”

Mihle Nkubungu’s story is one of courage, self-belief, and determination. At 16, she has shown that age is no barrier to ambition. She has stepped confidently into the spotlight, ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities that come with being a young model in today’s competitive industry. As she continues her journey with the Durban Model Search 2026, Mihle is not only chasing her own dreams but also inspiring other young people to find their confidence, put themselves out there, and embrace the power of being themselves.

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Bianca
Botha

#Pageant

Interview with Bianca Botha

Miss Eden SA 2025 Winner

Bianca Botha had a weekend most would describe as intense, but for her, it was exhilarating and full of lessons. Competing in both Miss Eden SA 2025 and Garden of Eden 2025 back-to-back pushed her beyond her comfort zone, but she embraced every moment.

“Competing in both in the same weekend was intense, exciting, and incredibly rewarding,” Bianca says. “It pushed me far beyond my comfort zone, but it also reminded me how strong and capable I am. Switching mindsets, energy, and looks within such a short time taught me discipline and focus. It was exhausting, but in the best possible way — a weekend I will never forget.”

At Miss Eden SA 2025, Bianca placed 2nd Runner Up and received multiple awards. For her, these achievements were more than just titles. “Placing 2nd Runner Up and receiving multiple awards meant more to me than just recognition,” she shares. “It was validation for the hard work, growth, and heart I put into the journey. It showed me that consistency, authenticity, and kindness are noticed. I walked away feeling proud — not only of the results, but of who I became during the process.”

Her connection with people and the community is central to her approach in pageantry, which she demonstrated by winning both the Public Choice and Philanthropist awards. “Those awards are incredibly close to my heart,” Bianca says. “Being chosen by the public and recognized for philanthropy means that people truly connected with me beyond the stage. Community, compassion, and giving back are core values in my life. Pageantry isn’t just about how you look — it’s about how you make people feel and how you use your platform to uplift others.”

The following day at Garden of Eden 2025, Bianca earned 1st Runner Up, Best Dressed, and another Public Choice award. While all the accolades were special, the Public Choice award stood out the most. “Knowing that people believed in me and supported me means everything,” she explains. “Best Dressed was also a proud moment because it reflected my creativity and personal style, but Public Choice represents genuine connection — and that’s priceless.”

When asked why she entered these competitions, Bianca says it was about growth and stepping into a space that demanded confidence, discipline, and purpose. “Pageantry gave me a voice and an opportunity to represent more than just myself — to stand for kindness, self-belief, and inner strength,” she adds.

Preparation for back-to-back competitions required careful planning. Bianca focused on organization, mental clarity, and self-care. “I had to manage my energy, stay present in each moment, and remind myself why I started,” she says. “Physically, I made sure I rested whenever possible and stayed calm under pressure.”

The most exciting moments for Bianca were hearing her name called for placements and awards. “It wasn’t just about the recognition,” she says. “It felt like a reward for believing in myself. Walking that stage knowing I gave my absolute best was unforgettable.”

Mentors, family, and friends played a significant role in her journey. “I’ve been incredibly blessed with supportive people around me — family, friends, and mentors who believed in me even when I doubted myself,” Bianca says. “Their guidance, encouragement, and honesty helped shape my confidence and kept me grounded throughout the journey.”

Balancing pageantry, school, hobbies, and personal life is all about discipline and prioritization. “I plan carefully, stay organized, and remind myself to rest when needed,” she says. “Balance isn’t about doing everything perfectly, but doing what matters with intention.” Reflecting on what pageantry has taught her, Bianca says, “I am stronger than I think. I learned how to handle pressure, take criticism, and still remain true to myself. Most importantly, I learned that confidence is built — it’s not something you wait for, it’s something you grow into.”

Her style and creativity were also recognized with the Best Dressed award. “I choose outfits that reflect who I am,” she explains. “I focus on elegance, confidence, and comfort. Style isn’t about trends — it’s about expressing your personality while honoring the occasion.”

Giving back remains close to her heart. “I’m passionate about helping people feel seen and supported, especially those who are overlooked,” Bianca says. “Giving back isn’t always about big gestures — sometimes it’s simply showing up, listening, and using your voice for good.”

For young people nervous about pageantry, Bianca offers simple advice: “Be brave enough to try. Nervousness means you care — and that’s a good thing. Don’t wait until you feel ready. Growth happens when you step forward despite fear. Believe in yourself, because confidence is built through action.”

Looking ahead, Bianca wants to continue growing in pageantry and modeling while using her platform to inspire others. “My goal is to represent authenticity, kindness, and strength — and to prove that success is about impact, not just titles,” she says.

Bianca’s journey over that unforgettable weekend shows that determination, heart, and connection can turn challenges into achievements and leave a lasting impression on everyone who meets her.

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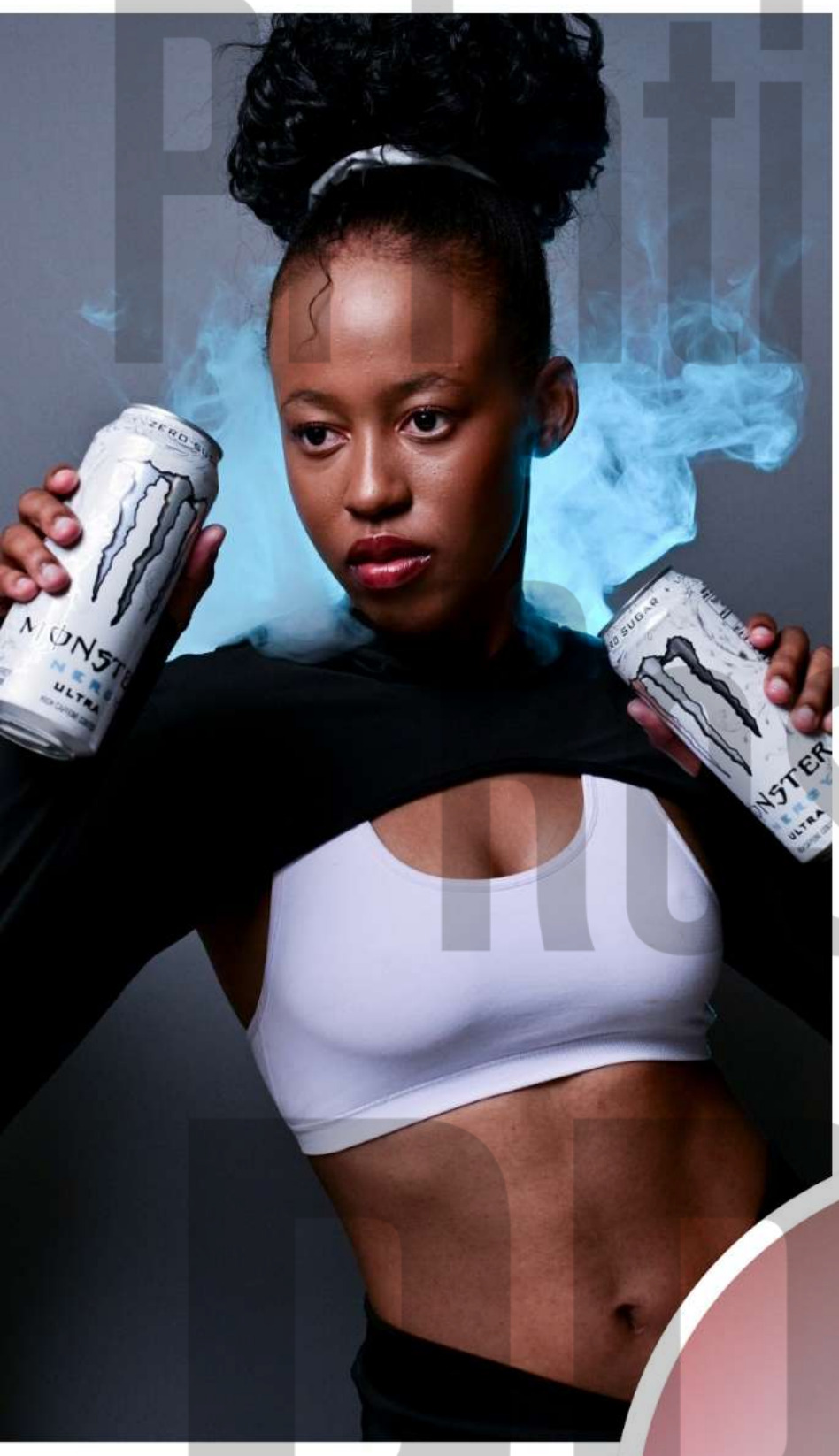
Reneilwe Sekwakwa



#Finalist

Introducing Reneilwe Sekwakwa

Limpopo Model Search 2026 Finalist

Reneilwe Sekwakwa is making her mark in South Africa's modeling and pageant scene, blending beauty, brains, and a growing passion for fitness. Her journey began in an unexpected way. "It started thanks to Tokollo Masekoameng, a girl I met in primary school who I consider a sister," Reneilwe recalls. "We were in a dance group together, and when we weren't dancing, she'd teach us what she learned at her modeling academy. She eventually convinced my mom that I should join her agency, and a year later, I joined Limpopo Beauty Modeling."

At first, Reneilwe felt intimidated by the experienced models. "I was nervous at my first competition," she admits, "but after winning the 'Rising Star' Miss Diamond award, I was motivated to work harder every year." That early win laid the foundation for a career full of ambition and growth.

The moment that changed her life came soon after. "Definitely winning Miss Capricorn Overall," she says. "It was my first major title and opened so many doors. As the Capricorn District Queen, I collaborated with district offices, mayors, and village queens. I was invited to high-profile events like Miss South Africa 2022 Ndavi Nokeri's homecoming, appeared on TV, and secured significant funding for my community projects."

Reneilwe has a clear understanding of the different branches of modeling and pageantry. "Pageants are about my personal story—using a title to build my advocacy and grow as a public figure," she explains. "Runway is where I express my love for fashion and creativity, making a statement without words. Commercial modeling is about being photogenic and selling a product or brand. Essentially, pageants tell my story, runway lets the outfit tell a story, and commercial work lets the product tell its own."

Her path took a turn in 2023 toward fitness modeling. "I was in my matric year and had scaled back on pageantry," she says. "Since my mind and body were used to constant challenges, I couldn't just focus on school alone. I started hitting the gym during my study breaks to multitask. I soon noticed my physique transforming into that of a fitness model. When my agency called me in to update my portfolio, my new path officially began."

Fitness has also reshaped her confidence and mindset. "The gym became my escape from the pressure of matric," she says. "It released my tension and cleared my mind; I felt physically and mentally lighter. Plus, it's hard to be sad when you have abs! It built a level of discipline that boosted my confidence beyond just my appearance."

Her debut as a fitness model came through a Sportscene shoot. "While most models style themselves in brands like Edgars or Foschini for their portfolios, I chose full Sportscene gear to introduce my new niche. It was a pivotal moment for my brand that brought me new skills and professional experience."

Reneilwe also recently featured in a Monster Energy campaign. "It was an amazing experience and a huge addition to my portfolio. I got to taste the new white Monster, which I loved! Behind the scenes, they used blue fog to create an insane atmosphere. It really helped me find my 'inner monster' expression, which was a fun challenge since I had to master a fierce, straight face instead of my usual pageant smile."

Competitions like Miss Grand South Africa shaped her discipline further. "Miss Grand is built on the '4Bs,' and one of those is 'Body,'" she says. "It pushed me to be more committed because I had to create gym content, share my progress on social media, and ensure I was stage-ready for the swimwear round."

Her training is rigorous. "I train four to five days a week. Mondays and Thursdays are for legs, Tuesdays are upper body, Wednesdays focus on core, and Fridays are for a full-body workout. I keep my weekends free for recovery." Despite this dedication, Reneilwe admits that nutrition remains her biggest challenge. "I started my gym journey without the expectation of becoming a fitness model, so I hadn't planned on changing my eating habits. Transitioning into a professional fitness model meant I had to start planning my nutrition properly to see results, which remains a challenge today."

Reneilwe's current goal, Miss Independent International South Africa, reflects her values. "This pageant stands for empowerment, independence, and inclusivity, which aligns perfectly with my advocacy for women's empowerment and education," she says. "It has already allowed me to collaborate with Spar, Global Givers, and Gae Limpopo Runners to provide school shoes and sanitary pads to children in need. Winning would give me the platform to take these dreams to an international stage in Thailand."

Winning a crown and the Miss Fitness title would mean more than recognition. "My biggest reward has always been serving as a role model," Reneilwe says. "Moving from a provincial to a national and potentially international role model would be incredible. Specifically, winning Miss Fitness would prove that fitness can successfully challenge and evolve traditional pageantry norms."

To women intimidated by the fitness industry, she offers this advice: "Fall in love with fitness for yourself before you make it a profession. That way, you'll feel confident in your craft rather than just chasing results."

Looking ahead, Reneilwe sees a busy, ambitious future. "I'm praying for more international opportunities, whether in pageantry or beyond. I plan to chase the Miss South Africa crown, but I also want to branch out into acting and complete my Law degree!"

Reneilwe Sekwakwa's journey shows that with passion, discipline, and a clear sense of purpose, beauty, fitness, and advocacy can all go hand in hand.

Pageant Buzz

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#Pageant

Interview with Baxolile Gqaleni

Miss Petite Globe SA 2025

Baxolile still remembers the first time she stepped onto a stage. She was a learner at Holy Angels Private School when a school competition was announced. “My mother encouraged me to enter,” she says. “I had no experience. I couldn’t smile or walk properly, and I didn’t place.” Even though she did not win, she never forgot that moment. “I kept the memory of that first stage,” she says. “It stayed with me.”

Later, while living with her grandmother in the village, Baxolile entered the local Miss Tyarha 2016 pageant. This time, things were different. She was crowned, and that victory changed everything.

“That’s when my love for modeling really started,” she explains. “That small stage sparked something in me.” She says that early exposure taught her that even the simplest opportunity can shape a future. “It set the foundation for every title I’ve pursued since.”

Over the years, Baxolile has collected several titles, but one stands above the rest. Being crowned Miss Petite Globe SA 2025 has meant the most to her. “It felt like a dream come true,” she says with a smile. The title also comes with a major responsibility. Baxolile will represent South Africa at the international pageant in Mexico this July. “I carry that responsibility with pride,” she says. “This title validates years of hard work, from my first school competition to the challenges I faced in rural villages.”

Her journey has not only been about personal success. It has also inspired her to create opportunities for others. Baxolile founded E&M Modelling Academy after realizing how unprepared she felt when she first entered competitions. “I didn’t want other kids to go through what I did,” she explains. “Entering competitions with no training or guidance can be overwhelming.” She wanted to build a safe space where young people could learn the basics and feel supported. “My goal is to help kids grow, reach their goals, and not feel lost like I once did.”

As a modeling coach, Baxolile focuses strongly on confidence and communication. “Without confidence and clear speech, no other skill can shine on stage,” she says. She teaches her students how to answer questions honestly and walk with self-assurance. Beyond runway skills, she includes speaking exercises, interview preparation, and mindset training. “I want each model to own her story and handle pressure with grace,” she adds.

Mental health is another cause close to her heart. Baxolile created a mental health awareness session called Breaking The Silence after reflecting on her own childhood. “I struggled with self-isolation and expressing my emotions,” she says. “Silence can be very damaging.”

Through her initiative, she offers a safe platform where people can share their feelings without judgment. “I’ve seen how anxiety, depression, and self-doubt affect young people in this industry,” she says. “That’s why mental health must be part of every workshop and event I host.”

She believes the modeling and pageant world can be emotionally draining. “There’s criticism from contestants and judges, financial pressure, and sometimes unfair treatment,” she explains. For Baxolile, mental health awareness helps participants protect their self-image and know when to seek help. “Asking for help should be seen as strength, not weakness,” she says.

In addition to being a titleholder and coach, Baxolile now also serves as a pageant judge. It is a role she deeply enjoys. “It’s my favorite role,” she says. “I get to spot new talent and help contestants grow.” She takes judging seriously and aims to give constructive feedback. “I balance technical skills with emotional intelligence,” she explains. “I want every participant to leave feeling encouraged.”

Balancing her busy career with academics requires discipline. Baxolile is a final-year student at Buffalo City College, and she follows a strict timetable. “Weekdays are for school. No modeling commitments,” she says firmly. Weekends are reserved for events, workshops, and coaching sessions. “This structure keeps everything on track.”

When she was crowned Miss Petite Globe SA in November 2025, the moment felt surreal. “I was so happy. It felt like a dream come true,” she says. For her, the crown represents years of effort and growth. “Every setback and every lesson led to that moment.” Representing South Africa internationally is something she does not take lightly. “It’s more than glittering outfits,” she says. “It’s about walking proudly with my flag and inspiring young South Africans.” She sees it as a chance to build global connections and showcase the country’s culture and creativity. “I want to bring back knowledge that can benefit aspiring models at home.”

Her preparation for Mexico is already underway. Baxolile is securing sponsorships, partnering with a charity organization, and planning intensive training. “I’ll focus on runway walks and speaking classes once the logistics are settled,” she says. Her preparation also includes fitness training, wardrobe fittings with local designers, and media coaching. “I want to present an authentic representation of South Africa.”

Like many in the industry, Baxolile has faced challenges. She has struggled with self-doubt and people-pleasing. “I had to learn to stay true to myself,” she says. Rejection taught her humility, financial strain taught her resourcefulness, and criticism taught her emotional control. “Those lessons shape how I mentor others today.”

Above all, Baxolile hopes her story inspires young people. “Dreams are achievable,” she says. “You don’t need validation from others.” She encourages young people to protect their mental health and stay true to their values.

As she prepares for Mexico, Baxolile welcomes support from her community. “Every contribution, whether financial, material, or simply sharing my journey, makes a difference,” she says.

For her, this journey is not just about wearing a crown. It is about creating opportunities, building confidence, and opening doors for the next generation.

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#Pageant

Interview with Victor Bili

Mr Waterfall South Africa 2025 1st runner-up

Victor Bili carries Libode with him wherever he goes. The proud son of Libode, now living in Cape Town, is a Cost and Management Accountant by profession and currently pursuing his passion for Economics. In 2025, he stepped onto a national stage and earned the title of Mr Waterfall South Africa 2025 1st runner-up, adding another milestone to a journey rooted in discipline, faith, and ambition.

Growing up in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape shaped Victor in ways he says he only fully understands now. “Growing up in the deep ends of Libode shaped me into a grounded and purpose-driven man,” Victor says. “Life was not always easy. We faced financial struggles and limited opportunities, but those challenges built my character.”

At the heart of his upbringing was his grandmother. Victor speaks about her with deep respect. “My grandmother played a pivotal role in my upbringing. She instilled discipline, faith, humility, and the importance of education,” he explains. “Through her guidance, I learned that your circumstances do not define your destiny.” Those early lessons became the foundation on which he built his future. “Libode gave me strength, perspective, and the hunger to create a better future, not just for myself but for others who come from where I come from.”

Leaving home for Cape Town marked a turning point. The move meant more than just changing provinces. It meant stepping into a bigger world. “The journey from Libode to Cape Town has been one of growth and transformation,” Victor says. “Leaving home meant stepping out of my comfort zone and confronting a much bigger world. It required courage, sacrifice, and adaptability.”

Cape Town opened doors. It exposed him to diversity and professional growth, but it also came with moments of doubt. “It wasn’t always smooth. There were moments of adjustment,” he admits. “But every step reinforced my belief that growth happens outside of comfort.”

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#Pageant

Interview with Victor Bili

Mr Waterfall South Africa 2025 1st runner-up

Even now, he says he carries his roots with pride while embracing the broader vision he has built in the city. Victor's professional path into Cost and Management Accounting was driven by a clear purpose. "I have always been passionate about structure, strategy, and problem-solving," he explains. Growing up, he saw firsthand the impact of financial hardship.

"I understood the value of financial discipline early on. I wanted a profession that would allow me to make informed decisions, help businesses grow sustainably, and contribute meaningfully to economic development." Precision, integrity, and analytical thinking are qualities he strongly identifies with, and they continue to guide his career as he deepens his focus on Economics.

His pageant journey began as a challenge to himself. "I wanted to step outside my comfort zone and test my confidence, communication skills, and leadership ability," Victor says. Entering Mr Waterfall South Africa 2025 was about more than competition.

"It was about representation. I wanted young boys from rural areas like Libode to see someone who looks like them standing confidently on a national stage."

When his name was called as 1st runner-up, the moment was emotional. "Of course, every contestant dreams of winning," he says, "but I saw that moment as validation of my hard work, growth, and impact." For Victor, the title was not just about placement. "It wasn't just about the crown. It was about the journey, the connections, and the platform gained."

Through the experience, he gained a deeper understanding of leadership. "Leadership is influence rooted in authenticity," Victor says. "True confidence is not about being the loudest in the room. It's about being secure in who you are." He believes leadership requires service, emotional intelligence, and the ability to uplift others.

Balancing a demanding professional career with pageantry and personal growth requires discipline. "I structure my time intentionally and ensure that my professional responsibilities remain a priority," he explains. For him, pageantry is not separate from his career. "It aligns with my growth goals. Whether it's in the boardroom or on stage, I show up prepared and focused."

His journey has not been without challenges. Financial limitations, self-doubt, and adapting to new environments tested him. "Moving from a rural background into competitive professional and public spaces was not easy," Victor says. "However, I overcame these challenges through faith, mentorship, and continuous learning. Every obstacle became a lesson rather than a limitation."

Representing his community on a national stage carries deep meaning. "Standing there as someone from the Eastern Cape, from Libode specifically, carries responsibility," he says. "I represent dreams that are still forming in young minds back home. I represent possibility. Excellence can come from anywhere."

Victor defines success as both career-driven and purpose-driven, but he is clear about what leads. "Purpose always comes first," he says. "A successful career without impact feels incomplete. True success is about growth, contribution, and leaving a positive legacy." To young men who look up to him, his message is direct. "Your background does not limit your future. Invest in education, believe in yourself even when circumstances don't reflect your dreams, and never be ashamed of where you come from."

Looking ahead, Victor plans to use his platform to focus on youth mentorship, financial literacy awareness, and confidence-building initiatives in rural communities. "I want to bridge the gap between rural potential and urban opportunity," he says. Professionally, he aims to grow into senior leadership within finance and strategic management, and possibly expand into broader public leadership roles. "I want my life to reflect impact, not just achievement," Victor says, a young man shaped by Libode and determined to shape the future in return.

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Dané van der Westhuizen

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Photographer: Mana Zita Bosch
Hair & Makeup: Mana Makeup

Dané van der Westhuizen stepped onto set in Cape Town for her recent red-and-white themed photoshoot and immediately felt something shift. "Stepping onto set in Cape Town felt surreal," Dané says. "The red and white theme was bold yet timeless, and the energy in the room was electric from the start." Dressed in striking red balanced with soft white, Dané says she felt "confident, feminine, and completely in my element."

For her, the colour choice was more than fashion. "There's something powerful about wearing red. It commands attention. Paired with the softness of white, it created such a beautiful balance. It was one of those moments where I truly felt aligned with my passion for fashion and self-expression."

The concept behind the shoot was carefully considered. "The inspiration behind the red and white concept was the contrast between strength and softness," Dané explains. "Red represents passion, boldness, and confidence, while white symbolizes elegance, purity, and grace. I loved the idea of combining those two energies into one look." In front of the camera, that contrast came alive. Each pose reflected control and calm, intensity and poise. For Dané, it was about telling a visual story without saying a word.

The shoot also marked a special milestone. Dané worked once again with photographer Mana Zita Bosch and the Mana Makeup team, collaborators she has known for five years. "Working with Mana Zita Bosch and Mana Makeup has been such an incredible journey," Dané says. "We actually did our 50th shoot together last month, which feels so special."

Over time, their professional relationship has grown into a strong creative partnership built on trust. "We've built a strong creative connection and mutual trust," she says. "That makes such a difference when you're trying to create something meaningful." When asked about her favorite moment from the day, Dané does not hesitate. "Honestly, celebrating our 50th shoot together stood out the most," she says. "Knowing we've worked together for five years made the moment feel bigger than just one photoshoot. It felt like a celebration of growth, trust, and creativity. That milestone meant so much to me."

Dané has often said she feels most alive in front of the camera. For her, modeling is not about appearance alone. "Modeling makes me feel truly myself because it allows me to express emotions and tell a story without saying a word," she explains. "When I'm in front of the camera, I feel present, confident, and completely alive. It's not just about looking beautiful. It's about channeling strength, grace, vulnerability, and passion all at once."

#Model

Dané van der Westhuizen

Strength and Grace in Harmony

Preparation plays a key role in that confidence. “Before a photoshoot, I prepare both mentally and physically,” Dané says. “Mentally, I take time to visualize the concept and the mood we’re creating. I remind myself to stay confident, present, and open to direction.” She is intentional about mindset. “I also focus on positive self-talk because mindset is everything when you’re stepping in front of a camera.”

Outside the studio, Dané finds inspiration in nature. “Spending time in nature helps me reconnect with myself,” she says. “The quiet, the fresh air, and the simplicity of being outdoors allow me to reset and reflect.” Those quiet moments ground her. “It reminds me that beauty isn’t only found in glam moments, but also in stillness and authenticity.”

At school, Dané’s favorite subject is Physical Science. Her love for logic and structure balances her creative world. “Physical Science fascinates me because it explains the ‘why’ behind everything around us,” she says. “I love understanding how forces, energy, and matter interact to shape the world we live in.” She enjoys the challenge. “It’s logical and structured, yet still full of discovery. It challenges me to think critically and solve problems.” For Dané, science reveals order and beauty working together.

Her future ambitions reflect that balance. Dané dreams of becoming an engineer or a chartered accountant one day. Managing academics and modeling requires discipline. “Balancing my academic goals with modeling is definitely challenging, but it’s all about organization and passion,” she says. “I prioritize my studies while setting aside dedicated time for shoots and creative projects.” She believes the two worlds support each other. “Modeling teaches confidence, self-expression, and time management. Those are skills I can apply in school and in my future career.”

Giving back is another priority. “Being involved in charity work reminds me to stay humble, grateful, and connected to my community,” Dané says. Her heart is especially drawn to animals. “The charity work I enjoy most is helping animals. I love supporting organizations that care for animals, whether it’s volunteering, raising awareness, or helping shelters. It’s a cause that’s really close to my heart.”

Dané’s biggest dreams are clear. She hopes one day to grace the cover of Vogue and to step onto the stage of Miss South Africa. For her, these goals are about more than recognition. “It’s a chance to inspire young girls to dream big, embrace who they are, and pursue their passions fearlessly,” she says.

One woman who inspires her deeply is Rolene Strauss. “Rolene embodies elegance, confidence, and intelligence,” Dané says. “She has shown that you can pursue your dreams while making a positive impact on others. I admire how she uses her platform to empower young women.”

Like any journey, modeling has come with challenges. “One of the biggest challenges I’ve faced is learning to trust myself and my abilities,” Dané admits. “Early on, it was easy to compare myself to others or doubt if I could truly succeed.” Those moments taught her important lessons. “They’ve shown me that growth doesn’t happen overnight, and that confidence comes from practice and staying true to who I am.”

Her message to other young girls is clear and confident. “You can absolutely do both,” Dané says. “It’s all about passion, discipline, and believing in yourself. Don’t let anyone tell you that you have to choose between your dreams. With focus and determination, you can excel in school and shine in front of the camera. Stay true to who you are and never be afraid to chase what makes your heart come alive.”

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Sarah Morgan Walker

Strength, Purpose & New Beginnings

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#Pageant

Interview with Sarah Walker

Mrs South Africa 2025 Top 30 Finalist

Sarah entered Mrs South Africa with a full heart and a clear purpose. “I’m very grateful to say I was extended an invitation to enter by a person I look up to and have done so my whole life,” Sarah says. She had wanted to enter in 2024, but her daughter was still very young at the time. “Initially, in 2024, I couldn’t enter due to my daughter being so young, but then in 2025, I knew it was the right time.”

For Sarah, the decision was never just about a crown. “I realised my story could serve a purpose beyond myself,” she explains. As a woman, mother of three, daughter, sister, friend and business professional, she has experienced both joy and pain in her journey. “I wanted to show other women that it’s never too late to choose yourself, to embrace change, and to lead with confidence.”

Sarah sees Mrs South Africa as far more than a pageant. “Mrs South Africa represents more than a crown to me; it’s a platform for impact, service, and real change,” she says. “I believe in using my voice to uplift others, to stand for family values, traditions, empowerment, and authenticity.” Throughout the journey, Sarah committed to staying true to herself. “I was authentic throughout the journey and in turn have made lifelong friends.”

When she received the news that she had been selected as a Top 30 finalist, the moment was emotional. “I felt an overwhelming mix of gratitude, excitement, and disbelief,” Sarah recalls. “It was a powerful moment of validation — not just for the effort I had put in, but for the journey I’ve walked as a woman, a mother, and a leader.” More than anything, she felt honoured. “Being named a Top 30 finalist reminded me that stepping out of your comfort zone and believing in yourself truly matters.”

The competition became a mirror for growth. “This journey taught me that as a woman, I am far more capable than I ever gave myself credit for,” Sarah says. She learned to trust her voice and honour her values. “It showed me that strength and softness can coexist, and that confidence is built through action.” Self-doubt was part of the process. “Yes, very much so,” Sarah admits. “Especially after having three children.” Pregnancy changed her body significantly, and she struggled with pigmentation on her face. “As much as my children are the loves of my life, the pregnancies changed my body. I just pushed through the doubt, both during and before.”

Her motivation was clear. “I wanted to show my daughters that once you commit to something, you must stick it out and give it your all.” Prayer and strong support from friends and family helped her keep perspective.

Balancing family life, work and pageant commitments was one of her biggest challenges. “This part was not easy,” Sarah says honestly. “I worked many hours after everyone in the house had gone to sleep. Countless hours.” Organisation became her survival tool. “I have a diary that I do monthly and daily planning in. I attend courses on how to be organised and upskill myself regularly in this arena.”

One memory stands out above the rest. “Hands down, the moment I made it into finals,” Sarah says. Walking onto the stage and seeing her girls, friends and family cheering was unforgettable. “I felt like I was on top of the world. No one can ever take that memory or feeling away from me.” Sharing her spiritual life on stage during the Top 30 finals was deeply meaningful. “Throughout my journey, I prayed for God’s will to be done. Doing it all for His glory made it worth it.”

The sisterhood of the 2025 class left a lasting mark on Sarah. “There has never been, and will never be, a class like 2025,” she says with a smile. “I have forged friendships for life.”

Looking back, Sarah sees herself differently. “Before, I saw myself mainly through the roles I fulfil — as a mother and a professional,” she reflects. “I often placed my own voice and dreams second.” The experience shifted that mindset. “I am not just someone who supports others — I am a woman who is allowed to take up space, to lead, to grow, and to pursue purpose with confidence.”

She discovered strengths she had always carried. “I am extremely driven when I’m passionate about what I’m doing,” Sarah says. “I have unbelievable grit and push through when the majority of people would have given up.” She also found joy in fundraising and organising events. “I thoroughly enjoy giving back to the community I live in and to South Africa.”

Now that the pageant has taken place, the title of Top 30 finalist holds deeper meaning. “It was not just a moment on a stage, but a journey that challenged me to grow and rediscover my purpose,” Sarah says. “Although the competition is over, what it ignited in me continues to guide everything I do. Watch this space.”

Her message to married women and mothers is direct. “Your time IS now! Don’t wait until this or that has been done, otherwise you will never jump in. You deserve to put you first for once in your lifetime.”

If she could speak to herself on the day she applied, her words would be simple. “I am more ready than I thought I was.”

Moving forward, Sarah plans to use her growth to uplift others. “I want to help other females discover themselves and be the best version they can be.”

To women who are considering entering but feel afraid, Sarah offers encouragement. “Fear often shows up when something truly matters to us,” she says. “You don’t enter because you have it all figured out — you enter to discover just how capable you really are. The courage to apply is already a victory in itself.”

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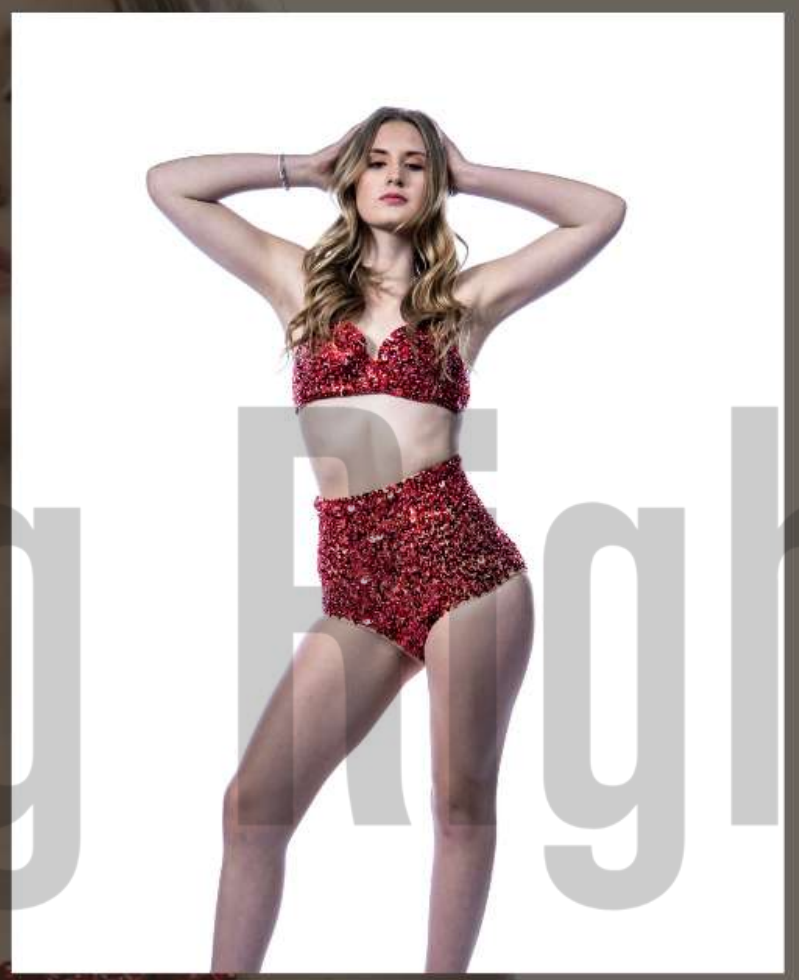
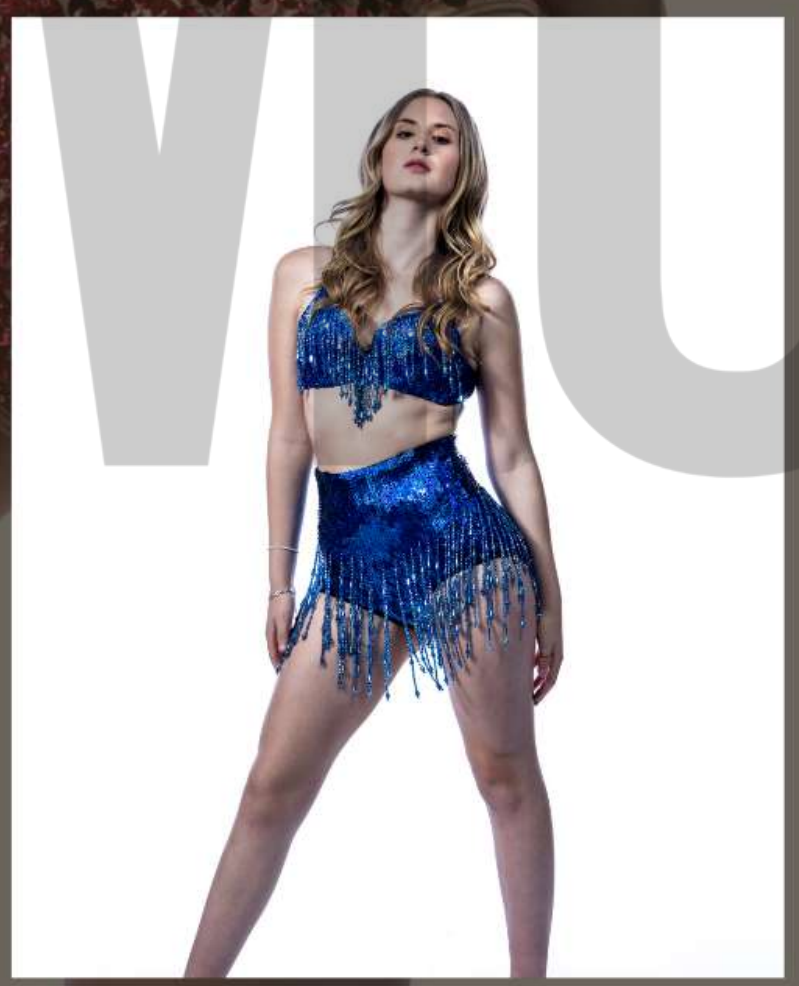
Woman

Costumes

Shining





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#Model

Interview with Chininke Homan

Balancing Ambition, Fashion, and Life

Chininke Homan is making her mark in South Africa's modelling scene, balancing a busy academic life with an emerging career on the runway. At just 19 years old, she proves that dedication and passion can go hand in hand. Growing up in Randfontein and attending Hoërskool Riebeeck Rand shaped Chininke in ways that still guide her today. "Those years taught me the value of hard work, community, and staying true to myself," she says. "I gained a strong foundation of discipline and confidence, which prepared me to pursue both my studies and modelling with focus and a grounded mindset."

Describing herself as a "farm girl at heart," Chininke credits her upbringing for her practical outlook and determination. "Being a farm girl made me grounded, hardworking, and patient," she explains. "It taught me responsibility and staying true to who I am. These qualities guide me in my studies and modelling, helping me remain humble, focused, and grateful in every situation."

Her interest in modelling began with a fascination for runway presence. "I realised the power of a walk when I watched models on the catwalk," Chininke recalls. "Modelling isn't just about clothes — it's about confidence, presence, and telling a story through movement. Seeing how a model can capture attention with posture, rhythm, and attitude inspired me to learn the craft myself and fully embody a designer's vision."

Chininke's skills were sharpened at Oxygen Models, an experience she says was invaluable. "Being part of Oxygen Models put me in a professional environment with high expectations," she says. "It pushed me to refine my walk, posture, and presence. I learned how to take direction quickly, adapt to different designers, and stay composed under pressure. Fittings, castings, and live shows taught me discipline, punctuality, and confidence — both on and off the runway." A major highlight came during her matric farewell fashion show. "Walking that runway was exciting and nerve-wracking in the best way," she says. "The energy backstage, the anticipation before stepping out, and the support from the audience made it unforgettable. Once I started walking, the nerves faded, and it became about enjoying the moment and owning my presence. It boosted my confidence and marked a special milestone in my modelling journey."

Another memorable experience was her photoshoot for Hollywood Costumes. "It challenged me to be expressive and fully step into character," she says. "Every outfit had its own personality, so it wasn't just about posing — it was about bringing the look to life through attitude and expression. The team made it fun and collaborative, which helped me relax and deliver my best. It showed me the importance of versatility and storytelling in modelling."

Chininke also made an impression at Miss Regal International SA, where she placed in the Top 4 under the guidance of Wayne Stafford. "Competing at that level taught me discipline, consistency, and confidence," she says. "It pushed me to refine my runway and stage presence, strengthened my communication skills, and taught me how to handle pressure. Working with Wayne showed me how to present myself with purpose and professionalism, on stage and off."

Balancing a BCom in Business Management at Akademia with modelling is no small feat. "Time management and discipline are key," she explains. "I plan my schedule carefully, prioritise deadlines, and ensure my academic responsibilities are handled before taking on modelling work. Studying business has helped me approach modelling professionally, while modelling has taught me focus and adaptability that carry over into my studies."

Her business studies also shape how she approaches modelling. "Business Management taught me to see modelling as both a creative and professional industry," she says. "I approach opportunities strategically, understand personal branding, and communicate confidently with agencies and clients. It also helps me plan, negotiate, and set long-term goals, giving me clarity and purpose in my career." Challenges remain, particularly in a competitive industry. "The hardest part has been staying confident despite rejection and uncertainty," Chininke admits. "Balancing self-discipline and constant improvement while studying is tough, but it strengthens my work ethic and keeps me focused on long-term growth."

Runway modelling is her favourite. "I love the energy and immediacy it demands," she says. "Commanding the stage and bringing a designer's vision to life is powerful. I also enjoy photoshoots for creativity and storytelling, and pageants for showcasing poise and communication skills, but the runway gives me a thrill that's hard to beat."

Her support system has been crucial. "My family has always encouraged me to pursue both academics and modelling," she says. "They've been with me through long study hours, early castings, and every milestone. Wayne Stafford has been an important mentor, helping me build confidence, professionalism, and stage presence."

For young women balancing studies and modelling, Chininke has simple advice: "Stay disciplined, patient, and believe in yourself. With good planning, it's possible to succeed in both. Treat every opportunity professionally, stay committed to your education, and surround yourself with supportive people."

Looking ahead, Chininke has clear goals. "In five years, I see myself combining modelling and business," she says. "I want to grow as a professional model while using my business knowledge to manage my personal brand, collaborate with agencies, and possibly start my own fashion venture. My goal is a balanced career where creativity and professionalism go hand in hand."

Protected Photos

MCKAYLA FAURE

Mckayla is turning early nerves into growing confidence as she builds her path in modeling through hard work, supportive mentors, and a strong belief in herself.

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#Model

Interview with Mckayla Faure

ACE Models Randburg

At just 16, Mckayla is already building a name for herself in the modeling space, but she admits the journey started from a place of fear rather than confidence. “I was always interested in modeling, but I was extremely shy,” Mckayla says with a soft laugh. “I liked the idea of learning how to express myself and grow in confidence.” In 2024, she made a bold decision to step out of her comfort zone and join ACE Models Randburg. “I wanted to challenge myself and try something new, even though it was very scary at first.”

Walking into her first classes, Mckayla remembers feeling overwhelmed. “When I first started, I was really quiet and nervous, especially in front of people and the camera,” she explains. But class by class, things began to change. Runway drills, posing sessions, and detailed feedback slowly helped her find her footing. “The modeling coaches’ support and encouragement really helped me believe in myself,” she says. “Seeing my progress over time made me feel much more confident and positive about myself.”

That growth did not go unnoticed. At ACE Randburg’s year-end function in 2024, Mckayla received the Rising Star Award. She still sounds surprised when she talks about it. “Winning the Rising Star Award was honestly a shock, but it made me feel really proud,” she says. “It showed me how much I had grown since joining ACE.” The recognition gave her fresh motivation. “It pushed me to work even harder, challenge myself more, and enter competitions like PPMC.”

A big part of Mckayla’s development has come from working with experienced creatives during shoots. She speaks warmly about coach Kyla Taylor, photographer Leigh Benson, and makeup artist Georgia Davis. “Working with such a supportive creative team has helped me grow a lot,” she says. “Kyla helped me build confidence and improve my posing and presence.

Leigh made me feel comfortable and confident in front of the camera.” She has also worked with other professionals in the industry, which helped her learn to adjust quickly. “I’ve learned how to take direction and adapt to different styles,” she explains. “Georgia and other makeup artists taught me what looks I like and what suits me best. Their support has helped me feel more relaxed and confident during shoots.”

Mckayla has already taken part in a variety of shoots, from simple polaroids to beauty editorials, and she has walked the runway at events including AMNC 2025. When asked what she loves most, her answer comes quickly. “My favourite part of modeling so far has been walking the runway and doing creative shoots,” she says. “Walking the ramp at events like AMNC 2025 was exciting and gave me such a confidence boost. I also love building my portfolio and seeing my progress.”

Outside the studio and runway, Mckayla leads an active life. She trains in ice skating and Muay Thai, two sports that have shaped her both physically and mentally. “Ice skating helps a lot with balance, posture, and grace,” she explains. “Muay Thai has helped me become stronger, more focused, and disciplined.” The benefits carry directly into her modeling. “Both sports have helped build confidence and control, which really helps on the runway and in photoshoots.” Balancing school, sports, modeling, and a normal teenage life takes planning. “It can definitely be busy, but I try to stay organised and manage my time properly,” Mckayla says. She leans on her support system when things feel overwhelming. “Doing things I enjoy keeps me motivated and energised, and having support from my family and coaches really helps.”

One of her biggest personal hurdles has been self-doubt. “My biggest challenge was confidence and being scared of being judged,” she admits. Through practice and encouragement at ACE, she learned to quiet that inner voice. “I learned to believe in myself more and not be so hard on myself.”

Modeling has changed how Mckayla sees herself. “It helped me see myself in a more positive way,” she says. “I’m much more confident now and more comfortable being myself. It’s taught me to believe in myself.” That belief has also influenced her personal style. “I’m more aware of what suits me and what makes me feel confident,” she explains. “By doing mood boards and preparing for photoshoots, I’ve learned more about my own style. I’m also not as shy as I used to be.”

Looking ahead, Mckayla has big goals. “I’d love to do more runway shows, grow my portfolio, and see where modeling can take me,” she says. She has already registered for Opulent and is excited about the opportunities it could bring. “I’d also love to combine modeling with my sports, like fitness or activewear modeling.”

For other teens who struggle with confidence or feel nervous about starting modeling, Mckayla’s message is simple. “Don’t give up and don’t be afraid to try,” she says. “Everyone starts somewhere, and confidence grows with time. Don’t let fear stop you from trying. Just take the chance, step out of your comfort zone, and believe in yourself.”

Reserved

Megan Davies

From a Township Dreamer to Pageant King & Model Mentor

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#Opulent

Interview with Megan Davies

Opulent Female Runway 2025 Finalist

Megan Davies from Bloemfontein is making her mark in the world of fashion. With a natural flair for creativity, Megan has always been drawn to the vibrant energy of style, even though she describes herself as shy. “Growing up, I was always into fashion and creativity,” she says, her voice warm with enthusiasm. “But I was quite reserved.”

That all changed in 2024 when she stepped into the world of modeling, quickly falling in love with the art of bringing designs to life on runways and in photoshoots. Now, she’s building her career, one confident stride at a time, through runway training, photoshoots, and collaborations with designers.

Megan’s big moment came when she entered the Female Runway Category at Opulent Models, a prestigious competition that pushed her far beyond her comfort zone. “My agency manager encouraged me to try it,” she recalls. “I’d never considered it before, but I’m so glad I did. It showed me what I’m capable of.” The experience wasn’t just about walking a runway—it was about growth, self-discovery, and embracing the spotlight in front of 5,000 people.

That first walk? Megan laughs as she remembers the nerves. “It was so nerve-wracking,” she admits. “The only thought in my head was, ‘Please… don’t trip!’” But as soon as she stepped onto the stage, something shifted. “The nerves started fading,” she says. By the end of the night, pride replaced fear. “I was so proud of myself,” she beams, recalling how each walk felt easier than the last, thanks to the encouragement from fellow models backstage. “The support from the other models was so encouraging,” she says. “It made all the difference.”

Working with designers was another highlight for Megan. “They were so friendly and professional,” she says. “It was an honor to bring their vision to life.” She felt comfortable collaborating with them, marveling at the chance to showcase their collections. The backstage team—makeup artists, hairstylists, and wardrobe experts—played a huge role in her transformation. “I was exhausted after days of practice,” Megan admits. “But once they worked their magic, I felt like a million dollars. I walked onto the runway with so much more confidence.”

Photographers brought a new layer of awareness to Megan’s craft. “Working with them made me so self-aware,” she says. “Every little thing—posture, facial expressions—matters because the camera catches everything.” That attention to detail sharpened her skills and deepened her appreciation for the precision modeling demands.

Preparing for the competition was no small feat. Physically, Megan stuck to a strict diet and daily workouts to stay in top form. Mentally, it was tougher. “I’m naturally shy, so I had to give myself pep talks,” she says with a smile. Support from friends and family gave her the boost she needed to push through. “They really helped me believe in myself,” she adds.

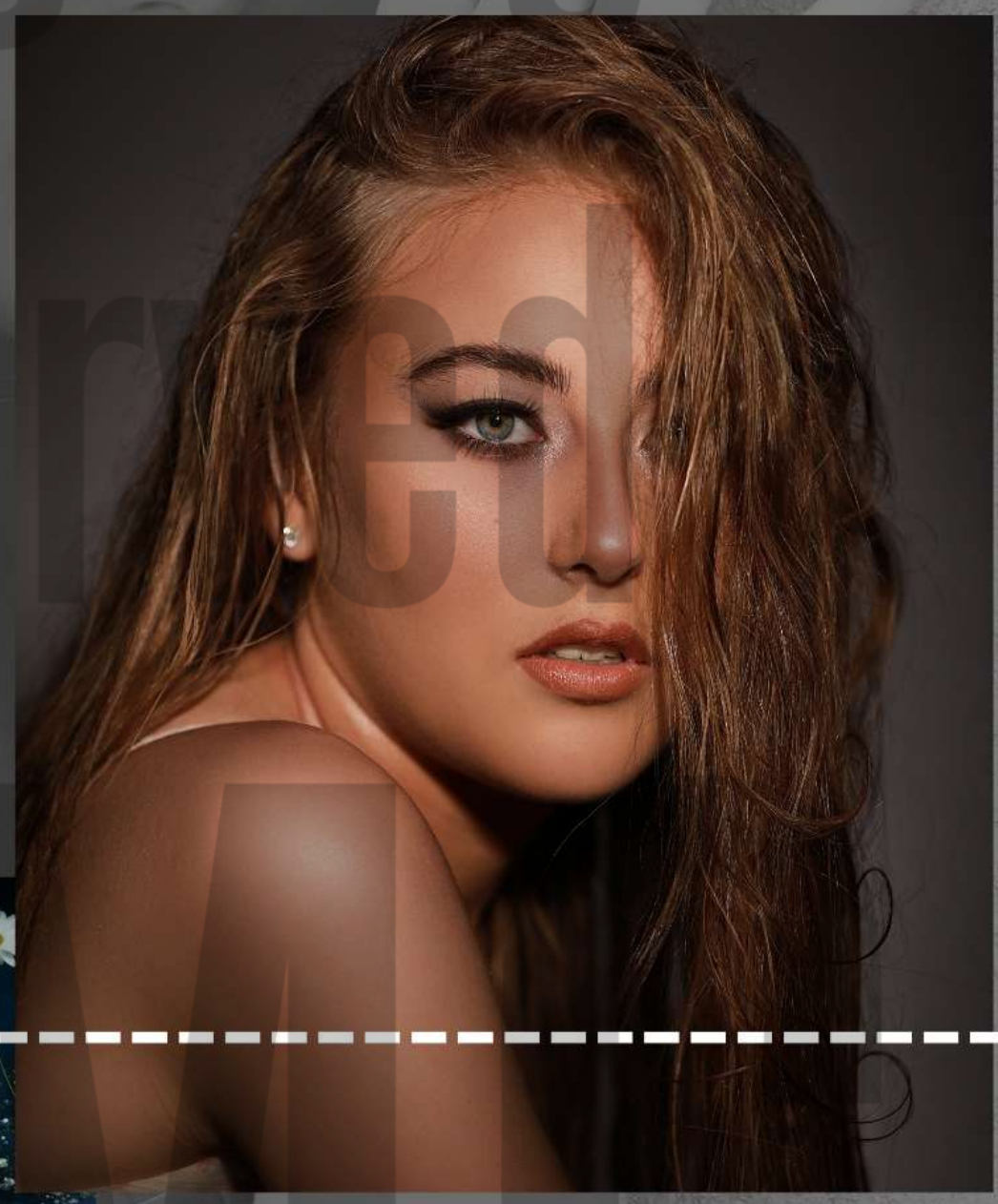
The competition wasn’t without its challenges. “Blisters on my feet and barely any sleep were the hardest parts,” Megan says. Plasters soothed the blisters, and coffee—courtesy of the event’s sponsors—kept her going. Mentally, she leaned on determination. “I just told myself, ‘I can do this, it’s the life of a model,’”

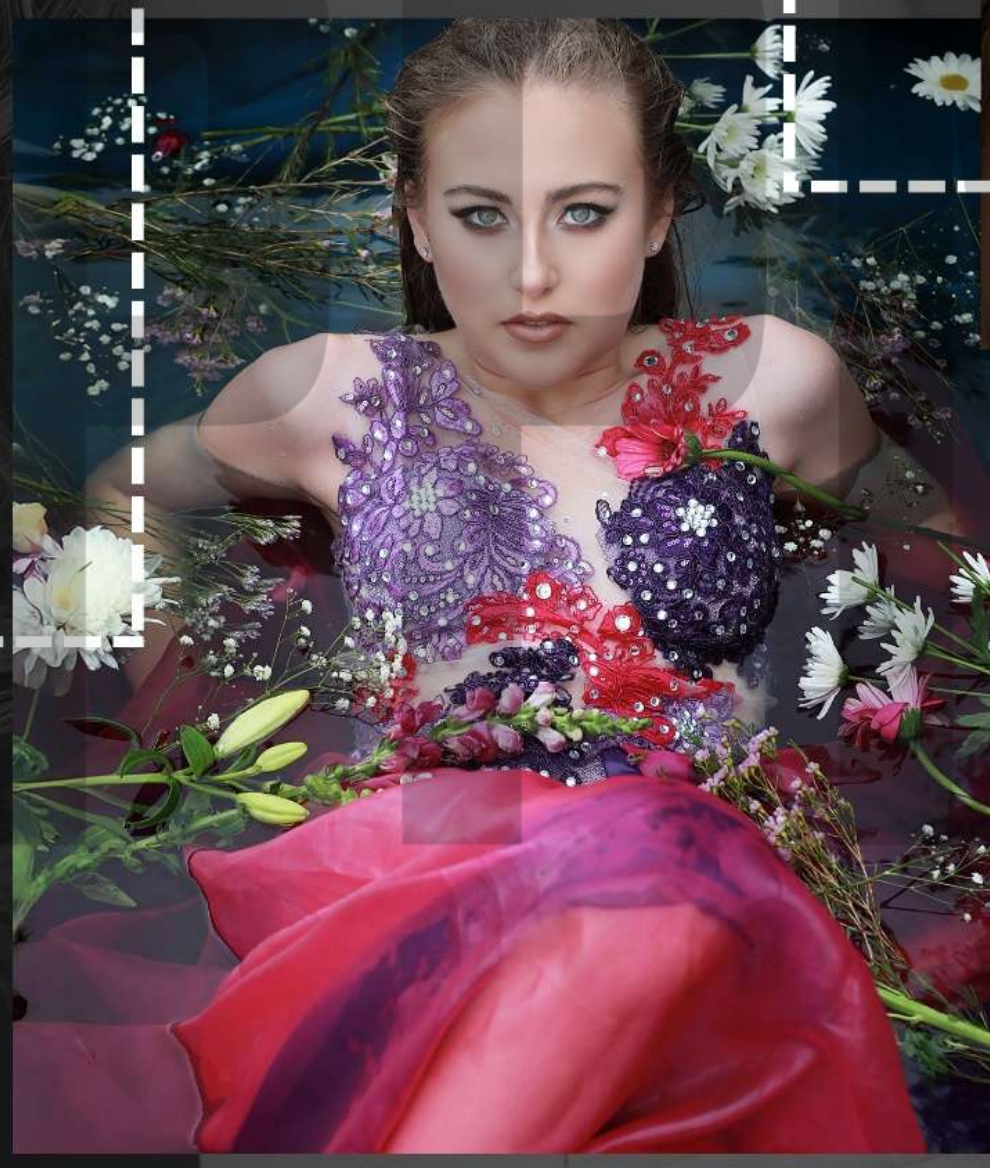
she says. That mindset carried her through. One moment stands out above the rest: her first step onto the stage. “Seeing thousands of people made my heart race,” she says. “It felt surreal, like I couldn’t believe I was actually doing it. Nothing will ever beat that moment.” The experience left her with newfound confidence and a key lesson about teamwork. “Everyone backstage has to get along and support each other,” she explains. “That’s what makes the show run smoothly.”

Megan’s time at Opulent Models opened her eyes to South Africa’s thriving fashion scene. “There’s so much talent here,” she says, her voice filled with admiration. “Seeing all these amazing models, designers, and creatives working together showed me how dynamic our industry is.” It also deepened her appreciation for the hard work and creativity behind every look.

For other young women dreaming of competing at Opulent Models, Megan’s advice is simple but heartfelt: “Just go for it. Don’t overthink it, don’t hold back. It’s not just about winning—it’s about growing, gaining experience, and being part of something prestigious. That alone is worth it.” With her newfound confidence and a growing portfolio, Megan is proof that stepping out of your comfort zone can lead to something extraordinary.

LEIGH-ANNE MULLER





Leigh-Anne Muller is a confident young pageant star whose growing list of titles, love for the runway, and passion for charity work are shaping her into an inspiring role model on and off the stage.

#Model

Interview with Leigh-Anne Muller

Pageants SA Spokesmodel 2025

Leigh-Anne still remembers the thrill of stepping onto a stage for the very first time. What began as a little girl's love for dressing up and posing for photos quickly grew into something much bigger. "I loved being in front of the camera and expressing myself," Leigh-Anne says with a smile. "My mom encouraged me to enter my very first competition, and from that moment, I felt excited and confident." With the support of her family and a dedicated coach guiding her from early on, Leigh-Anne found not only a hobby, but a passion that continues to shape her young life.

That passion has already led to major achievements. One of her proudest moments came when she was named Pageants SA Spokesmodel 2025. For Leigh-Anne, the title represents more than a crown or sash. "Being on stage and speaking with confidence made me feel proud because it showed me how much I've grown," she explains. She credits her coach for helping her develop strong communication skills and stage presence. "It's not just about the award. It's about using my voice, believing in myself, and having the courage to express who I am."

Another highlight in Leigh-Anne's journey was earning the title of Miss Petite Teen International SA at Miss Junior South Africa. Although she has not yet competed internationally, the honor carries deep meaning. "Receiving a title that represents South Africa inspired me to carry myself with pride and responsibility," Leigh-Anne says. The experience strengthened her confidence and taught her valuable lessons about leadership and always doing her best, both on and off the stage.

Her long list of placements at Toddler and Tween of the World also stands out as a special chapter. Among those achievements, placing 3rd Princess overall in her age category felt especially rewarding. "It reflected all the hard work I put into preparing," she says. She also treasures the photogenic awards she received. "Modeling is something I truly enjoy." With careful preparation, time management, and focus, Leigh-Anne says she was able to perform at her best. Most importantly, she learned that pageants are about more than winning. "They are about growing, learning, and creating unforgettable memories."

A major milestone came when Leigh-Anne appeared on the cover of PPMC Magazine. Seeing her face on the front of a publication was a dream come true. "I was incredibly excited and grateful for the opportunity," she says. "Moments like this remind me that hard work truly pays off." Being part of the PPMC family has helped her build confidence and opened doors to new experiences. "It motivates me to keep working hard and always represent myself in the best way possible."

Leigh-Anne has also stepped confidently into the world of runway modeling. Walking in the New Romantics fashion show was an experience she will never forget. "I loved the excitement backstage and the feeling of stepping onto the runway," she says. Wearing an outfit that made her feel strong and confident was a highlight of the show. She enjoys the difference between runway and pageants. "Runway focuses on showcasing the designer's vision, but both allow me to express myself and do what I love."

Beyond the spotlight, Leigh-Anne uses her platform to make a difference. As an ambassador for the WAS Foundation, she is involved in charity work that is close to her heart. The foundation supports about 300 children, along with underprivileged community members and the elderly.

"It gives me the opportunity to help make a meaningful difference," she says. She is especially passionate about uplifting children and reminding elderly people that they are valued and never forgotten. "Seeing the impact that kindness can have on someone's life inspires me to keep giving back wherever I can." Through charity work, Leigh-Anne says she has become more compassionate and grateful. Balancing a busy schedule that includes pageants, modeling, charity work, school, and family life is not always easy, but Leigh-Anne has learned how to manage her time. "School always comes first," she says firmly. With the help of her family and coach, she stays organized while still making time to relax and have fun. "They support me in a way that allows me to follow my dreams while still being a normal teen."

Like many young competitors, Leigh-Anne has faced moments of pressure and disappointment. One of her biggest lessons has been learning not to be too hard on herself. "I won't win everything, and that's okay," she says. "Every experience is a chance to learn and improve." Encouragement from her coach helps her stay positive, focused, and confident.

What Leigh-Anne enjoys most about pageantry is the variety it offers. "Photogenic shoots let me be creative, fitness keeps me disciplined, and interviews help me use my voice," she says. Above all, she values the friendships and memories she makes along the way, and the chance to inspire others.

Her message to young people who feel shy but dream of entering pageants or modeling is simple and heartfelt. "Believe in yourself and don't let fear stop you from trying something new. Confidence grows with practice, and everyone starts somewhere."

Looking ahead, Leigh-Anne dreams of continuing to grow in modeling and pageantry while expanding her charity work. One day, she hopes to represent her country on an international stage. "Most importantly, I want to inspire others to follow their dreams and make a positive impact," she says.

For those just starting out, her advice is practical and sincere. "Set clear goals, work hard, and never be afraid to learn from others. Get involved in charity work because it teaches compassion and purpose. Most importantly, enjoy every moment of the journey."

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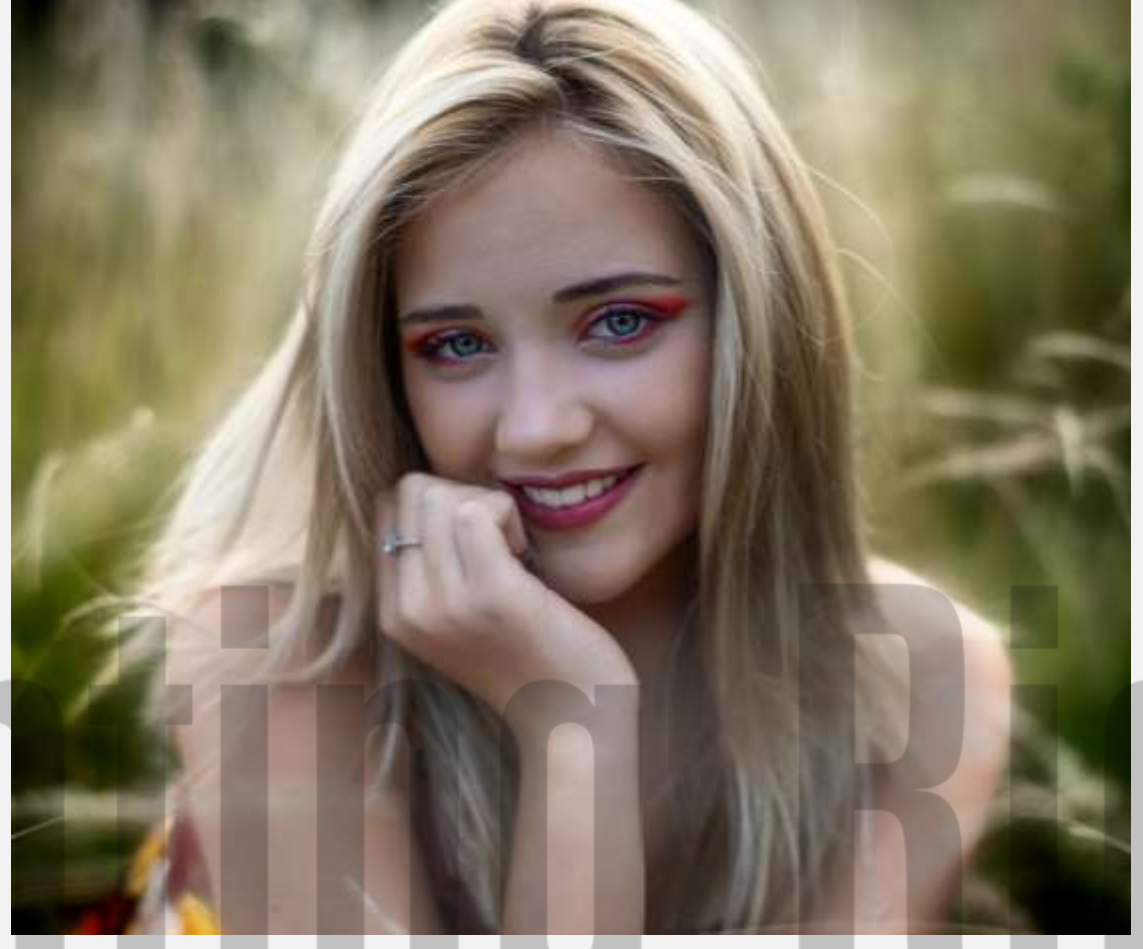

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#Phata

Interview with Andrew Basson

Portraits That Reveal Truth

Andrew Basson is not just a photographer — he's an experienced creator. Known for his work with high-profile individuals in music, acting, and politics, Andrew brings a unique approach to every session, focusing on connection, comfort, and capturing the true essence of his subjects.

"I have a very friendly and open-minded approach to how I interact with a subject," Andrew explains. "My main goal is to ensure clear communication persists between myself and the person I'm photographing."

When it comes to easing nervous clients, Andrew has developed a method that balances guidance with positivity. "I provide them with feedback and posing guidance while we work. Positive reinforcement helps put them at ease, and guiding their posing ensures the absolute best results possible," he says.

For Andrew, a photography session is more than just snapping pictures. "Each session is done on a per-subject basis. Some need a playful experience, while others need a guided one to help them relax. Often, I'll just put my camera down and talk with them, get to know them. Creating that connection makes the photos easier to capture. Each session feels more like a friendly get-together with an old friend than a stale business transaction."

Capturing hidden emotions is one of Andrew's greatest strengths. "The hardest thing is getting them to show me who they really are. The first 100 to 200 photos are just a test to see how comfortable they get. It's a give-and-take: I give them a compliment and show the result, and they relax a bit more. It takes clear communication, confidence, and respect. You have to build trust first — that can take anywhere from ten minutes to 45 minutes, depending on the subject."

One session stands out in Andrew's memory: a shoot with Professor David Block. "It was on the side of a mountain. He was in a full suit, barefoot, standing on a rock. I managed to get him so relaxed and draw out who he really is. We spoke, worked together, and the final photos captured everything I had hoped for. That connection is something I'll always cherish."

Despite working with well-known personalities, Andrew treats every subject equally. "I ignore all social status. I don't look up who they are or what they've achieved. I treat them as a human. Whether they're a leading artist or a homeless person, everyone gets the same respect. Part of our session is getting to know them without any preconceived notions."

This approach allows him to focus fully on the individual rather than their fame. "Ignorance is bliss. I focus on getting to know them, their pets, and special memories. I rarely ask about their work unless it's about whether they enjoy it. Separating the person from the status is key."

Feedback from clients is always positive, Andrew notes, though he keeps it private. "I never ask for feedback. If they share it, I cherish it but don't post it online. Each session is personal, and the trust they place in me is more important than public validation." For Andrew, the technical side of photography is just as exciting as the personal connection. "I love the setup, testing lights, and playfully interacting with the subject. Showing them, the silly test shots helps them relax and giggle. Involving them in the process breaks the ice and makes the session more enjoyable."

Sessions are planned with flexibility in mind. "We agree on a date, time, outfit, and location. Beyond that, it's flexible. Sometimes we leave the studio and take a walk or do something spontaneous. I like to keep sessions free-flowing so the subject feels comfortable."

Andrew's philosophy centers on experiences over achievements. "A good experience builds character and memories, while an achievement is forgotten quickly. By focusing on the experience and ignoring awards or social validation, I've built lasting relationships. Today, I still meet some of my subjects for family events or coffee. The connections matter more than any photography award."

Surprises happen often during sessions. "One subject cried when they saw a photo that reminded them of their deceased grandmother. Another stood silently staring at a framed photo I gave them unexpectedly. Moments like that show the impact of going the extra mile."

His advice to aspiring photographers is simple: "Stop looking at social media comments. Put your camera down, talk to your subject, and understand them. Don't chase validation or let ego get in the way. Focus on your subject, and your career will follow naturally."

For Andrew Basson, photography is more than a profession. It's a way to connect, create memories, and capture the authentic self of every person who stands in front of his lens.

Crowned Miss Westcol 2025

Luyanda Lulu Gumede

#Pageant

Meet Luyanda Lulu Gumede
Crowned Miss Westcol 2025

A story by:
Etienne Vermaak

Becoming Miss Westcol was not a destination she reached overnight, but a journey shaped by nerves, growth, and a strong belief in purpose. She describes her preparation as an emotional whirlwind. “During my audition, I was so nervous I forgot my introduction. I thought I had ruined my chances,” she says. But determination pulled her forward. She gave her strongest performance in the interview round and found herself selected for the top three. From that moment, she knew she had to keep pushing.

The days leading up to the finale were filled with rehearsals and growing excitement. Meeting contestants from other campuses made her realize the level of competition. “The energy in the room was electric, and I knew I had to bring my A-game,” she recalls. When she was announced as the winner, she felt a mix of joy and disbelief. “I was humbled when I heard my contestant number called. It was made even more special by the support of my campus friends and SRC. They played a significant role in my success.”

Her inspiration for joining pageants comes from a place of admiration. “I’m inspired by the philanthropic work of models and the way they give back. I’m drawn to the elegance and the excitement of pageantry,” she explains. Her title, she believes, is more than a crown. It is a chance to uplift.The most challenging part of the competition came during the Question and Answer round. “The unpredictability of the judges’ questions was daunting,” she says. She spent days and nights practicing in front of a mirror, repeating answers, learning to think quickly, and finding confidence in her voice. “That preparation helped me stay composed. It taught me to trust my thoughts.”

As Miss Westcol, she represents five campuses, a responsibility she does not take lightly. “Being a title holder means showing up even when it’s tough. It means carrying myself with grace and leadership,” she says. Balancing her duties with academics is one of her biggest priorities. She dedicates weekdays to her studies and weekends to pageant duties. “It’s not easy, but I’m determined to excel in both.”

Her journey has deeply shaped her personal growth. “Standing in front of a crowd used to terrify me. Now I enjoy connecting with students with a genuine smile,” she says. Accepting her own smile, including the gap in her teeth she once disliked, has been part of her confidence journey. “Beauty standards are subjective. I learned to love myself. I want others to feel the same.”

One of her most treasured experiences was being invited to speak at the Sports, Arts, and Culture Awards. “It was an honor to stand in front of over 30 passionate students and remind them of their worth. I wanted them to know that the college stands behind them.” The impact she hopes to leave behind is rooted in empowerment.

She wants to encourage more students to take part in activities outside of academics. “Every student has something special to offer. I want to inspire creativity, leadership, and kindness. I want to create a ripple effect that lasts long after my reign.”

Her preparation for the pageant came together in just three days. “I was fortunate to have an incredible coach, Miss Samantha. She worked tirelessly to prepare me.” She focused on mastering her Q&A delivery, speaking with calm confidence.

When asked how she defines beauty, she answers thoughtfully. “Beauty is confidence, kindness, and compassion. It’s about being unapologetically yourself. Pageants have the power to redefine beauty by focusing on character, purpose, and voice.”

Her advice to those considering pageantry is sincere and encouraging. “Be true to yourself. Prepare. Be open to learning. Take care of yourself. But most importantly, enjoy the journey.” Criticism comes with the title, and she has experienced it firsthand, especially from those who do not understand her role. “Some people ask, ‘Who are you to win?’ I choose to respond with kindness, because I represent something bigger than myself.”

She hopes to use her platform to advocate for education and to raise awareness on issues such as period poverty. “It’s unacceptable that many cannot afford menstrual products. I want to amplify the voices of those affected and inspire change.”

Looking forward, her dreams are clear. She plans to complete her diploma and continue in pageantry. But her greatest ambition is to open her own modeling academy. “I want a space where young models can learn, grow, and shine. A place built on confidence, kindness, and empowerment.” Her journey is ongoing, shaped by patience, courage, and purpose. And she is just getting started.

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Saskia de Jager

Fitness Balance, Authentic Connections, and Giving Back

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Instagram: @sasdejager_

#Inspire

Interview with Saskia De Jager

Champion of Self-Love

At just 20 years old, she has already discovered the power of self-love, balance, and giving back. Born in 2005, she is an extrovert who thrives on connection, whether with family, friends, or children. “Family and friends are what makes life precious,” she says. “They keep me grounded, supported, and honest. They remind me where I come from and who I am beyond achievements or goals.”

Her journey into health and fitness started from a personal desire to feel better — physically, mentally, and emotionally. “I knew I deserved a life where I felt confident and healthy, not held back,” she explains. Over time, small changes began to add up, and she realized that her journey wasn’t just about weight, but about self-respect, consistency, and creating a lifestyle she could sustain.

“It taught me patience and compassion — especially for people who are struggling,” she reflects. “I now see health as a lifestyle, not a finish line.”

Her focus extends beyond her own wellness. She has a passion for helping others achieve their dream bodies. “I know what it feels like being left out, and giving someone a second chance in life gives me joy,” she shares. For her, supporting someone through challenges — whether in fitness or in life — is deeply rewarding. “I believe everyone has moments where they’re misunderstood or at a low point. Seeing someone learn from a mistake and rise stronger is incredibly rewarding to me.”

For her, health means more than just physical fitness. “It means having energy, peace of mind, discipline, and self-love. It’s about feeling strong in your body, confident in your choices, and aligned with yourself — not just looking a certain way,” she says. She nurtures herself through cooking, which she calls both creative and grounding.

“Cooking is how I nurture myself and others,” she says. Self-care routines, whether skincare, haircare, or quiet evenings, help her slow down and reconnect with herself. “They remind me that taking care of my body and mind is not selfish, it’s necessary.”

She places great value on real connections, kindness, and growth. “Beyond social media, I’m someone who values authentic relationships,” she says. She is reflective and mindful, always seeking to become better each day and to create a life that feels meaningful, not just impressive. Nature, children, and family all play a role in keeping her grounded. “Children bring joy and perspective, and nature keeps me balanced. Both influence my desire to build a life that’s meaningful, nurturing, and connected — not rushed or superficial.”

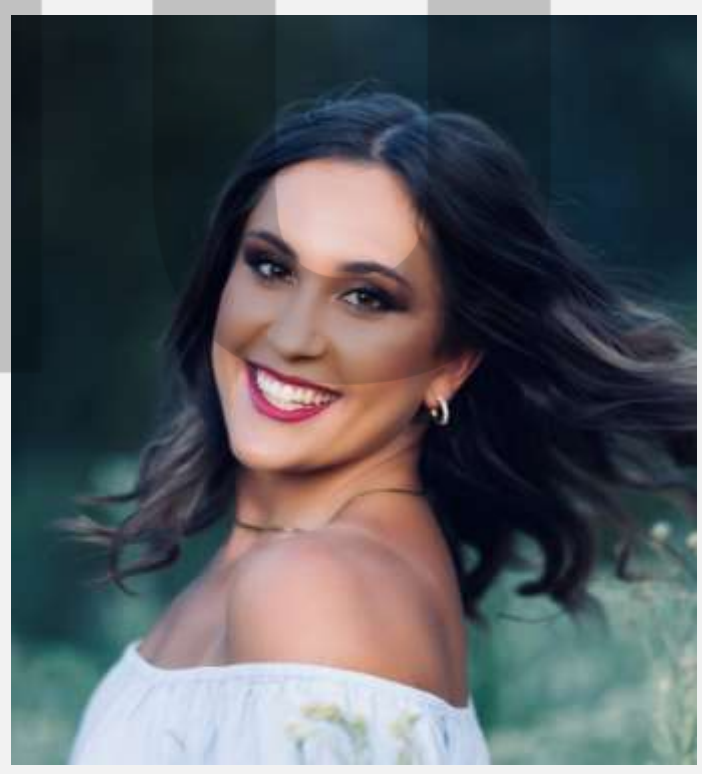
Her approach to beauty is about confidence and self-expression. “For me, they’re tools of self-expression, not hiding. When I take care of my skin, hair, and makeup, I feel put together and confident — it’s a form of self-respect and empowerment,” she says. She also believes the eyes reveal a person’s true story.

“Eyes reflect truth — pain, joy, resilience, and love. You can’t fake what someone’s eyes reveal. When I look into someone’s eyes, I see their journey, and that’s something I deeply respect.”

She shares wisdom that comes from experience and reflection. “Be patient and kind to yourself. Confidence isn’t built overnight — it grows when you keep promises to yourself. Stop comparing your chapter one to someone else’s chapter ten. You are worthy exactly where you are,” she says. Honesty and authenticity are central to how she interacts with the world. “By being honest and real, I share both the highs and the struggles, because authenticity motivates more than perfection. I want people to know they’re capable — even on days they doubt themselves.”

Her evenings are simple but purposeful. “A calm evening routine — skincare, comfortable clothes, a good meal, and quiet time. Sometimes music, sometimes nature, sometimes just being still. Peace is my reset button,” she shares. Looking ahead, she hopes to continue growing personally and professionally while staying aligned with her values. “Helping others, expanding my impact, and building a life that feels balanced, meaningful, and authentic are my biggest goals,” she says.

At the heart of it all, she believes in giving love, care, and attention in everything she does. Cooking is her love language, and self-care through makeup, skin, and hair is her daily practice. She lives by the principle that everyone’s story matters, and that growth, kindness, and authenticity are what truly shape a meaningful life.

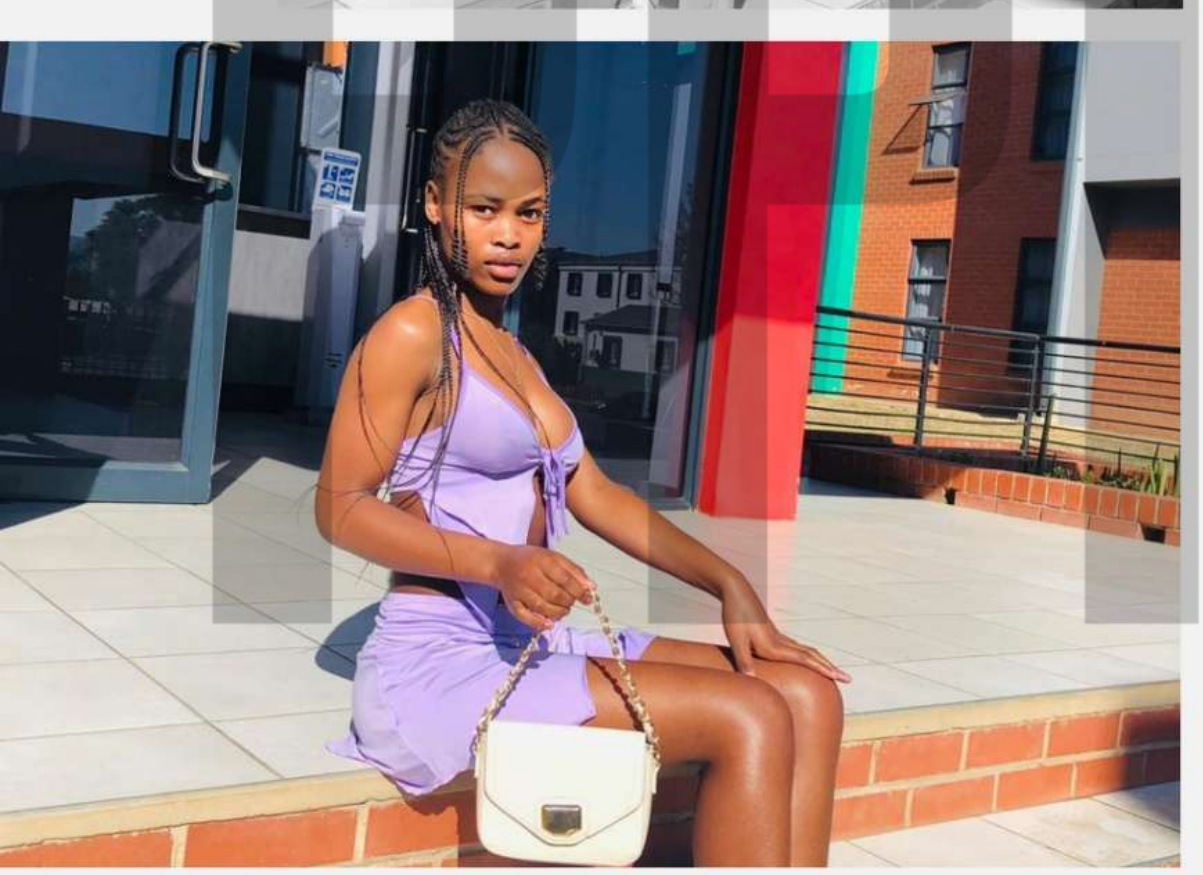


PPMC MAGAZINE

JOHAN UNGERER SIGNATURE EVENTS

MBASA QASHA

Proudly South African



At just 19, Mbasa Qasha is stepping out of her comfort zone and into the spotlight as a Durban Model Search 2026 finalist with a story rooted in faith, growth, and purpose.

#Finalist

Interview with Mbasa Qasha

Durban Model Search 2026 Finalist

Mbasa Qasha is a 19-year-old model from Mount Ayliff, Puka Location in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. She is a Durban Model Search 2026 finalist and is ready to show the country what she is capable of.

“I’m proudly South African,” Mbasa says. “I see myself as a versatile individual with a deep love for learning. I’m passionate about inspiring and educating others through my experiences. I’m also a strong advocate for mental health and faith, using both as tools for healing, growth, and hope.”

When she discovered she had been selected as a Durban Model Search finalist, Mbasa felt encouraged to give the competition her all. “Some opportunities require you to go all out,” she says, “especially because they may come only once in a lifetime.”

Entering the competition was not an easy decision. “As someone who has learned to be contained and introverted, I wanted to spread my wings,” she admits. “It was uncomfortable, but 2026 is my year of stepping out of my comfort zone and embracing growth.”

Modeling was not always something Mbasa saw for herself. “I would see models on TV and in magazines, but I never imagined myself doing it,” she explains. “The standard of models looked very different from me.” That changed when people began complimenting her looks. “I started believing in myself, and I used the heels I had already bought to practice modeling around the house.”

Her love for modeling grew steadily. In 2024, Mbasa entered her first pageant, Miss UKZN, where she earned the Miss Charity title. Later that year, she also competed in Miss Heritage and was crowned First Princess. “Those experiences were invaluable,” she says. “They gave me confidence and helped me understand what the world of modeling and pageantry is really about.” Financial constraints kept Mbasa from fully participating in 2025. “I mostly served as a judge in pageants that year,” she says. But in 2026, she decided to dive in completely and pursue the Durban Model Search. “I knew it was time to fully commit to my journey,” she says.

The competition has already brought excitement and fulfillment. “The most thrilling part has been knowing that I will be featured in a PPMC magazine,” Mbasa says. “It’s a dream I’ve carried for so long finally coming to life.”

Even with a small social media following, she has embraced the challenge of securing votes. “It’s pushed me out of my comfort zone and strengthened my confidence,” she says. “I’ve learned to show up boldly, even when it feels uncomfortable.”

Mbasa doesn’t like to limit herself in modeling. “I believe there is room to grow in many areas,” she says. “I see myself leaning toward runway and commercial modeling because they allow me to express confidence, versatility, and connect with a wider audience.”

Support from family and friends has been crucial. “I’ve been blessed with amazing support,” she says. “Most importantly, my grandfather, who is my guardian, has been my biggest supporter. He constantly encourages me and believes in me.”

One of the biggest surprises for Mbasa has been learning what the industry values most. “It’s not just about looks,” she explains. “Confidence, discipline, and authenticity matter a lot. Showing up prepared and true to yourself is just as important as appearance.”

Her preparation includes mental grounding, practicing her walk or poses, and praying. “I remind myself why I started, take deep breaths, and focus on showing up as my best self rather than being perfect,” she says.

What sets Mbasa apart is more than her appearance. “My journey, resilience, and sense of purpose make me stand out,” she says. “I bring authenticity, depth, and a message of growth, faith, and mental health advocacy. Modeling for me isn’t just about appearances; it’s about sharing a story and inspiring others.”

Winning would be a pivotal step in her career. “It would open doors, give me exposure, and validate the courage it took to step out of my comfort zone,” she says. “More than that, it would remind me that dreams are achievable when you take the risk.”

Her ultimate dream is to build a successful modeling career while using her platform to inspire and educate. “I want to advocate for mental health, faith, and young people who come from humble beginnings,” she says.

Mbasa has advice for anyone hesitant to step forward. “It’s okay to feel fear. It’s natural,” she says. “But fear shouldn’t stop you. True growth happens when you take the first step, even when your heart is racing. Believe in yourself, take the leap, and trust that you are stronger and more capable than you think. Sometimes, the moment you’re most scared is the moment that changes everything.”

With courage, purpose, and faith guiding her, Mbasa Qasha is stepping into 2026 ready to make her mark on the modeling world.

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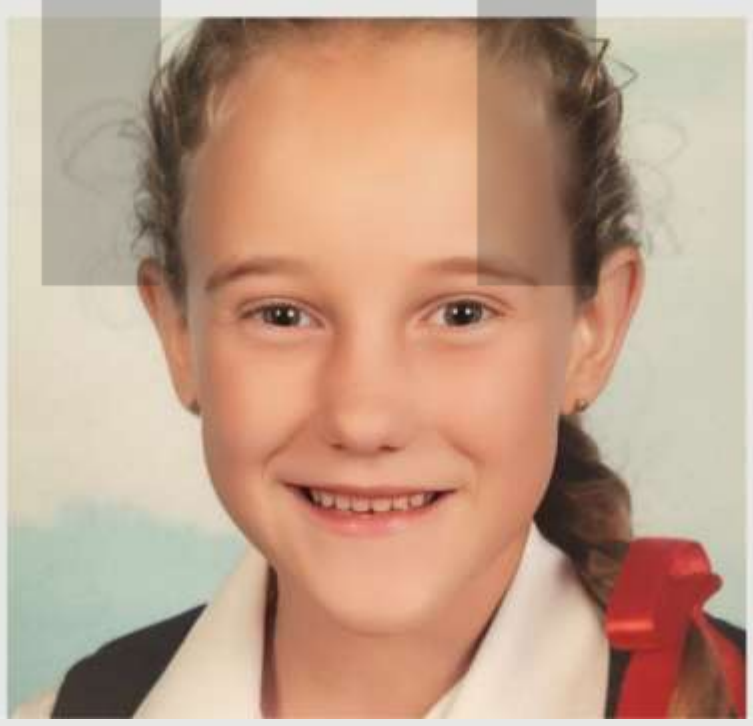
RONELLE BESTER



Ronelle Bester, 19, has faced a unique and challenging school journey, navigating learning differences, anxiety, and social struggles while finding her own path and inner strength.

#Inspire

Interview with Ronelle Bester

Finding Strength Beyond The Norm

Ronelle Bester is 19 and describes herself in a simple, honest way. “I am who I am,” Ronelle says. “A little different, a loner that sees and does things outside the normal box.” Her school journey was never a straight road, but it shaped the strong, self-aware young woman she is today.

In the early years, things felt manageable. Ronelle was diagnosed with expressive language disorder and anxiety in primary school. Even so, she achieved strong academic results and earned gold prizes at the Eisteddfod for art, including drawing and stained glass work. “Grade 1 to 3 was not bad,” she explains. “I was still coping.”

Everything changed in Grade 4 when classes started rotating. “The chaos brought my anxiety to the surface,” Ronelle says. “My whole system went into panic mode.” She became afraid to ask questions in class. “Someone once said, ‘That’s a stupid question,’ and after that, if I didn’t understand, I would just start crying.” That moment followed her for years. “I became known as ‘the girl who always cries.’”

Expressing herself clearly was a daily battle. “I struggled to formulate my questions so teachers and other pupils would understand me,” she says. “Most of the time they didn’t. It was very frustrating.” In Grade 5, one teacher made a difference by trying to understand her communication style. Still, socially she felt out of place. “I didn’t like small talk, so I was usually pushed out.”

High school brought a brief sense of belonging when Ronelle joined the orchestra in Grade 8. “At first I felt like I belonged,” she says. “The teacher gave me tasks in the instrument room, and that gave me purpose.” But her strong sense of order clashed with others. “I like discipline and structure. When I spoke up about learners misbehaving and was ignored, I got fed up and quit.”

Academically, Ronelle managed well until subjects became more abstract. “In Grade 10 the questions were more about reading between the lines and interpretation,” she explains. “That’s not my strength.” By Grade 11, her motivation dropped sharply. “I was unmotivated and depressed.”

Her mother sought professional help, and Ronelle was assessed by two occupational therapists. She was diagnosed with borderline autism, ADHD, and dyslexia. “When I first heard it, I was shocked,” she says. “But then the puzzle pieces started fitting together. It explained why I do things the way I do.”

Socially, she never felt she fit with either group. “I didn’t fit in with the girls. I was more interested in what the boys were doing, fixing things and figuring things out,” she says. “But I didn’t fit with the boys either. I just didn’t feel like I belonged in the school crowd.” Her respect for rules often caused conflict. “When learners disrupted class and I reached my limit, I had no filter. I would tell them to stop, and that made me the annoying one.”

At home, her parents carried worries she did not fully see at the time. “My mother never told me that the therapists said I might not make Grade 12,” Ronelle says. “She just encouraged me to work harder.” Extra lessons were arranged, even though Ronelle’s concentration was limited. “After a school day, my focus was finished.”

One teacher from primary school remained a bright memory. “He was big with a stern face, and I was scared at first,” she says. “Then my mom told me he was like my grandpa, strict but kind.” He paired her with a gentle classmate who became a close friend. “He taught me that you have to laugh once a day,” Ronelle smiles. “Whenever we saw each other, he’d ask, ‘Have you laughed today?’ That made me feel seen.”

Coping was not easy. Ronelle developed trichotillomania and began pulling out her hair. “I went to a counselor, and it helped, but I didn’t stop,” she says. She spent time in a mental health facility during one December holiday and later began wearing a wig. “I was so anxious that people would find out.” At home, she retreated to what her mother called her “cave.” “Blackout curtains, silence, no harsh light. I even had a projector that showed stars on the walls. That space helped me calm down.”

Despite everything, she finished school. “I don’t know how I got through,” Ronelle admits. “Maybe stubbornness, maybe inner strength, and definitely my parents’ support.” Passing Grade 12 brought relief, but not a perfect result. “I didn’t pass physics, and I need it to study aircraft mechanics,” she says. “So I’m rewriting physics in June.”

Ronelle hopes her story helps others who feel different. “Just keep going,” she says. “Find your inner strength. Find something you love and use it to relax. Don’t worry so much about what others think. You do you.”

She also has advice for families and schools. “Teachers have a lot on their plates,” Ronelle says. “I don’t think they always have time for children who learn differently.” She believes specialised environments can help. “If parents can afford it, private school or homeschooling can make a big difference.”

Her final message is practical and heartfelt. “If you’re struggling, get outside help and do your best,” Ronelle says. “If a subject is too hard, decide early whether to change or commit fully. And if you stay, give it your all.”

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Juan-Marié Herbst

Chasing Strength, Speed, Balance Fearlessly

#Fitness

Introducing Juan-Marié Herbst

Hyrox and CrossFit Athlete

Juan-Marié Herbst is ready to take on the world again. The 33-year-old from Krugersdorp has made Hyrox and CrossFit her full-time focus since 2023, and 2026 is shaping up to be her biggest year yet. “I was beyond relieved. It was the main priority for 2026 and a tick off the bucket list,” she says about qualifying for the Hyrox World Championships in Stockholm.

Returning to the world stage after competing at Hyrox Worlds in Chicago last year, Juan-Marié feels more prepared than ever. “I am ready to make an impression. Firstly to improve my own PB, because I compare myself to myself. I am beyond proud to represent South Africa yet again in the biggest growing sport. I have focused so much more on my weaknesses. So I can only see improvement.”

The lessons from Chicago were clear. “Run more! More than 50% of Hyrox is running. Even with some stations needing strength, if you do not run enough, you will suffer,” she explains. Hyrox, for those unfamiliar, is 1km running between eight working stations, making a total of 8km. “It sounds doable, and it is. But if you want to be at the top, the run is more like a sprint. Hyrox is the perfect combination of strength and endurance. It is growing so popular because of the accessibility to do the sport.”

Juan-Marié is also the African Champion for Deadly Dozen, another hybrid competition that combines running and strength. “Deadly Dozen and Hyrox are both hybrid sports. So not much different. Deadly is only 5km in total, 12 working stations, and 12 x 400m running in between. What makes this unique is the 400m is a total flat-out sprint and lung burner.”

Qualifying individually and in doubles to represent South Africa in London was a dream come true. “I have to pinch myself. It is beyond what I have hoped for. I worked really hard and wanted to podium. Taking first was the cherry on top,” she says. Balancing elite-level training while being a mom has required serious adjustments. “The adjustment from full-day Creche to half-day Grade R was a shock to the system. I made some adjustments and it seems to be working. CrossFit at 5am, second session at 11am. School pickup at 1pm. Then I take her to the track for athletics training at 3pm, and I use this opportunity to also do a track session or just walk around the track. To and from the track is our bonding time, talking about our day.”

Her training week is intense, seven days a week. “Weekdays I do 2-3 sessions. Weekends are either slower, with a long run, or a hectic weekend competing. Mornings are CrossFit-focused. Midday training is Hyrox-focused, and the third session is Mobility, Pilates, or Recovery-focused,” she explains.

Looking ahead, Juan-Marié has set her sights on reaching the Elite 15 in Hyrox. “Trying hard to make an impression in the Pro Category for now. To be honest, it is a lot of hours and training. You have to be mentally strong because not every session will feel good or go well. If I set my mind to something, I work my ass off and usually get it. Physically I am fit, I just think I need some fine-tuning to get to that Elite 15.”

She admits one of her toughest obstacles is balancing personal life with training. “Convincing myself that it is okay to focus on myself sometimes. I like to please. I feel guilty for going on a long run on a Sunday afternoon because that is usually family time. Luckily I have a very supportive husband and parents.”

Recovery, nutrition, and mindset are non-negotiable. “Mindset – it needs to be very strong. Most of the training is hard and not fun. Nutrition – important to get enough protein and carbs, otherwise you will feel it in your next session. Recovery – you cannot go without it. I cannot function with bad sleep. I do physio sessions regularly for niggles and tight muscles.”

Inspiring other women and moms is central to her mission. “I found that most women, even career-driven women, drop everything or seem to think they have to drop everything, their dreams, aspirations as soon as they have kids. And they don’t have to. Although my support system is just amazing.”

Sponsors have already recognized her potential. “I received sponsorship from Saltabs in November last year. JHB Hyrox Puma approached me after I placed first in Pro Women Solo and offered me a partnership which has exceeded all my dreams and expectations. I think most athletes carry the cost of travelling themselves. The next partnership I would hope to attract is someone who can assist financially. South African athletes need more exposure to compete against the world. That is the only way we will get better.”

When asked what she hopes people will associate with her name in the future, Juan-Marié says simply, “A humble, friendly, enthusiastic woman that is passionate about sport.”

For Juan-Marié, the journey is far from over. With determination, discipline, and a deep love for her sport, she is not only competing for medals but for the message she carries: being a mom and chasing your dreams are not mutually exclusive.

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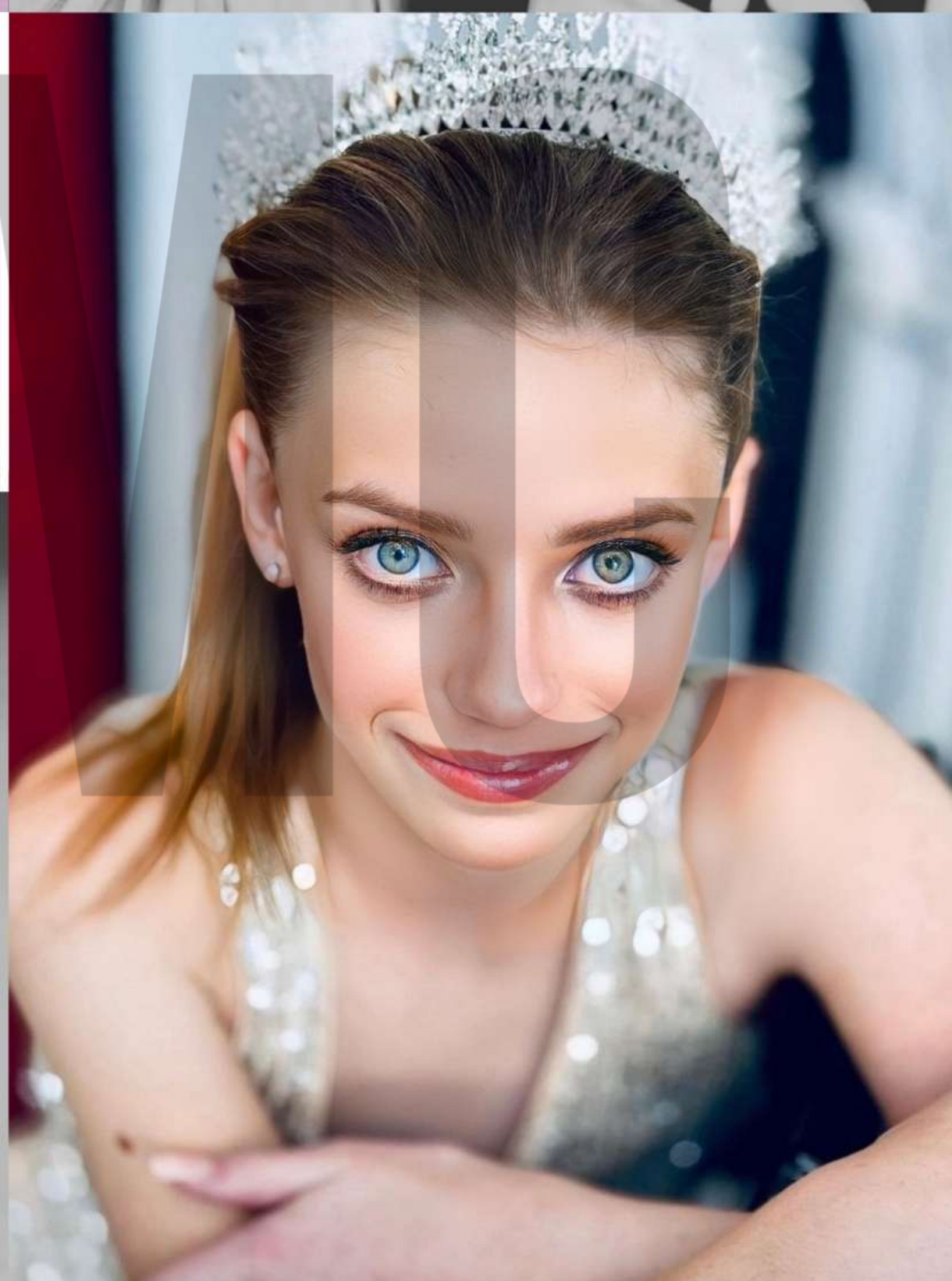
REBECCA WALKER

"My authenticity, my imagination, and my genuine heart for the community around me"



#Finalist

Interview with Rebecca Walker

Durban Model Search 2026 Finalist

Rebecca is 14 and already carries herself with the calm confidence of someone who knows exactly who she is. Kind-hearted, cheerful, and grounded in strong family values, Rebecca describes herself as "a happy person with a curiosity that lights up every room." That curiosity has now led her onto an exciting new path as a finalist in the Durban Model Search 2026.

When Rebecca found out she had been selected, the moment felt almost unreal. "I felt incredibly honoured and grateful," Rebecca says. "Being selected as a Durban Model Search 2026 finalist was both surreal and affirming. It reminded me that hard work, self-belief, and staying true to who you are really do matter." Rebecca says she feels excited and proud to represent Durban, while also staying humble about the journey ahead.

For Rebecca, the competition is about more than just looking good in front of a camera. "I entered the Durban Model Search because it represents more than just modelling — it's a platform for growth, confidence, and self-expression," Rebecca explains. She wanted to push herself beyond what feels safe and familiar. "I wanted to challenge myself, step outside my comfort zone, and embrace an opportunity that celebrates individuality and purpose."

Modelling has been part of Rebecca's world for years, thanks to her mom. Rebecca watched her mother take part in the Mrs South Africa journey last year, where she placed in the top 30. "My mom has been modelling since she was seven, so I was introduced to modelling from a young age," Rebecca says. Since then, Rebecca has taken part in several photoshoots, including work for brands and business professionals such as Aldytha Da Silva. Each experience helped her grow more comfortable in front of the camera.

So far, one of Rebecca's favourite parts of the competition has been the official photoshoot. "Definitely the photoshoot for the Durban Model Search and prepping all the outfits we needed," Rebecca says with a smile. But for Rebecca, the excitement goes deeper than outfits and poses. "It has also been the personal growth. From meeting inspiring young ladies to pushing myself creatively and professionally, every stage has challenged me to rise higher."

Of course, balancing it all has not been easy. Rebecca is not only a model finalist, but also a daughter, sister, friend, granddaughter, netball and hockey team player, and a dedicated student. "The biggest challenge has been balancing this journey with all my responsibilities," Rebecca admits. "Learning to prioritise myself without guilt has pushed me to grow. It's taught me discipline and the importance of self-care."

Through the competition, Rebecca says her confidence has grown in a real and lasting way. "This competition has helped me believe in myself more," Rebecca shares. "It's pushed me out of my comfort zone and taught me that it's okay to try new things and be proud of who I am. I've learned that I don't have to be perfect to be enough."

Looking ahead, Rebecca is keeping her options open in the modelling world. "I can see myself very happily in all areas of modelling in the future," Rebecca says. Runway, commercial, editorial, and even pageant modelling all appeal to her, and she is eager to explore every opportunity that comes her way.

Throughout everything, Rebecca says her biggest supporter has been close to her heart. "My mom," Rebecca says simply. With her mother's experience and guidance, Rebecca feels encouraged and understood every step of the way.

Rebecca has also learned that modelling is about far more than appearance. "I was surprised by how much discipline and hard work goes into modelling," Rebecca says. "It's not just about looks — it's about confidence, professionalism, preparation, practice, teamwork, and being kind and respectful. I've learned that attitude and effort really matter."

Before any big casting, shoot, or runway walk, Rebecca focuses on both her inner and outer preparation. "I spend a lot of time with God, in prayer," Rebecca says. She also enjoys relaxing rituals like bubble baths, manicures, pedicures, and facials with her mom and sisters. Exercise, healthy eating, and staying hydrated are also part of her routine.

Rebecca believes what sets her apart is not just how she looks, but who she is. "My authenticity, my imagination, and my genuine heart for the community around me," Rebecca says.

If she were to win Durban Model Search 2026, Rebecca sees it as a major step forward. "Elevation, and hopefully being able to plug into an excellent modelling agency," Rebecca explains.

Her biggest dream is bold and clear. "To be on the front cover of Vogue one day," Rebecca says.

For other young people who feel too nervous to try, Rebecca has gentle encouragement. "Just try one modelling class or do a mini photoshoot — you'd be surprised at what you can do once you've taken action," Rebecca says. "I believe in you."

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Ezimnandi Kwini

Passion, Purpose & Leadership

#Pageant

Interview with Ezimnandi Kwini

Miss Glitz and Glam SA Int. 2025

Ezimnandi Kwini remembers the moment she stepped onto the stage at Miss Glitz and Glam South Africa International on October 11th. She was surrounded by bright lights, cheering supporters, and fellow contestants who had also worked hard to reach this level. “I felt a mix of excitement and nerves as I took the stage,” she says.

“I reminded myself that my hard work had led me to this moment. I told myself to enjoy the experience and show my passion, instead of worrying about the pressure.” For Ezimnandi, it was not only about the competition. It was about showing how far she had come and being proud of her growth.

Representing her province on a national stage was a proud moment in her journey. It marked a new chapter as she moved from local pageants to a bigger platform. “Representing my province was a huge honour,” she explains. “It showed me how much I have grown as a model and as a person.” Standing in front of a national audience made her realise the importance of where she comes from and the pride she carries for the Eastern Cape. It was a moment where her story connected with the dreams of many young people watching her.

Titles such as Eastern Cape Representative of Glitz and Face of Glitz and Glamour have had a strong influence on her career. “Being crowned gave me exposure and credibility,” she says. “It opened doors and helped me connect with brands, companies, and professionals.”

These titles have allowed her to reach people she would not have met before. Through this, she has been able to inspire others and continue to make a positive mark in her community. Her journey is not only about the stage. It is also about how she uses her voice and platform to create change.

Ezimnandi is passionate about empowering young people. She strongly believes that the voices of youth matter. “Young people are the future,” she says. “Their energy and ideas are important. I want to encourage them to be confident, real, and passionate about what they do.” She hopes that young people can learn to love themselves and not hold back because of fear. Her message is simple: “Embrace your uniqueness and don’t be afraid to shine.”

Community development is close to her heart. During her reign, she worked with a community center, teaching values and sharing knowledge with younger children. She also joined a community garden project that provides fresh food to families in need.

“I care about nourishing young minds and helping my community grow,” she says. As a youth reporter and radio presenter, she gives young people a safe space to talk about real issues. “I want young people to know that they are heard and that they are not alone,” she explains. Her journey has not always been easy. One of the biggest challenges she has faced is financial pressure. Pageants, travel, outfits, and preparation all require resources. “I had to be resourceful,” she says. “I learned to ask for support from my community, friends, and family.” By stepping out of her comfort zone, she created new opportunities and found strength in asking for help when needed. She learned that growth comes with courage and openness.

Balancing school, duties as a title holder, and personal life is something she takes seriously. “Education is very important to me,” she says. “I want to be well-rounded and educated.”

She manages her time carefully so that she can perform well in school while also fulfilling her responsibilities in modeling and community work. She also makes time for rest and self-care, understanding the importance of mental health. “Taking care of my mind helps me stay balanced and strong,” she says.

Her advice to young people is full of encouragement. “Don’t let anyone tell you that you are too young to make a difference,” she says. “Let your actions speak. Believe in yourself and don’t give up on your dreams.” She reminds young people that every great journey begins with a first step, no matter how small.

Looking ahead, Ezimnandi has clear goals. She plans to continue in pageantry and aims to one day compete for Miss South Africa or Miss Teen South Africa. She also plans to work hard academically and build a strong future. “I want to keep growing,” she says. “My dreams are big, and I am ready to work for them.”

Ezimnandi’s story is one of passion, dedication, and purpose. She stands not only as a model, but as a leader for the next generation—one who believes in shining brightly and helping others do the same.

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TANYA VAN BLERK

At 49, Tanya van Blerk is proving that it's never too late to chase new challenges, turning a four-year fitness journey into a stunning debut on the Opulent Models stage.

#Opulent

Interview with Tanya van Blerk

Opulent Fitness Physique Finalist 2025

At 49 years old, Tanya van Blerk describes herself as someone who never shies away from a new challenge. Four years ago, she decided to step into the gym and begin what she calls her "second chapter."

What began as a fitness journey to feel stronger soon evolved into a passion that led her to the stage in the Fitness Physique Female Category at Opulent Models. "I'm a 49-year-old enthusiast with a passion for embracing new challenges," Tanya says warmly. "My fitness journey began four years ago when I started hitting the gym."

Stepping onto the stage in front of thousands of people was something she had imagined many times, but living it was something completely different. "It was truly phenomenal! The energy of the crowd was electric," says Tanya. "The applause and cheers got me so pumped up. I loved every moment of it. The adrenaline rush was exhilarating. It was unforgettable."

She credits much of the event experience to those behind the scenes. "I have to give a huge shout to Johan, Daain and the entire team for organising such an amazing event," she says. "A big thank you to Liezl Nortje and the Grizzly Bears for the outstanding outfits.

They truly made us look glamorous." Tanya says one of the things that stood out most was how supportive everyone was. "The fitness group was incredibly supportive. Everyone cheered each other on. If you're thinking of taking the stage with The Opulent Models, I say go for it! Show off your hard work and confidence. You won't regret it."

Tanya remembers her first walk on stage with perfect clarity. "My first walk was exhilarating," she says. "I felt a mix of nerves and excitement as I stepped onto the stage. The adrenaline and the applause from the audience boosted my energy. It was everything I hoped it would be." Working alongside designers was something she describes as a dream. "It was an amazing experience. Liezl was super accommodating and sweet, making the whole process smooth and enjoyable. Working with her and the Grizzly team was fantastic. They brought their A-game, and I loved showcasing their creations alongside my physique."

The glam teams also played a major role. "The makeup artists, hairstylists, and wardrobe team were amazing," Tanya says. "They worked their magic and made me feel like a million bucks. The makeup artist accentuated my features, the hairstylist created a stunning look, and the wardrobe team fitted me in an outfit that made me feel confident and fierce. Their attention to detail helped me feel polished and ready. I was able to focus on owning the stage."

Tanya also enjoyed working with the photographers. "It was an absolute blast," she says. "They were super professional, and their guidance really helped bring out the best in me. Big shoutout to the photography team for capturing my look and vibe so perfectly."

When asked what motivated her to enter the Fitness Physique category, Tanya smiles. "I've had a passion for modelling from a young age. I wanted to push myself and show the results of my hard work and dedication to fitness."

Preparing for the competition demanded discipline. "I focused on achieving peak condition through rigorous training and a strict diet. It was stressful at times, but I relied on positive self-talk to stay motivated. I also had a strong support network within the group, which helped me handle the emotional side of the journey."

One of Tanya's favourite memories happened backstage. "There were many, but one that stands out was when Liezl Nortje and the Grizzly Bears helped us into our outfits. It was a whirlwind of excitement, laughter, and nerves. We supported and encouraged one another right until the moment we stepped out."

Like many competitors, Tanya faced challenges along the way, though she describes them as manageable. "I faced minimal challenges, mainly personal obstacles that I had to set aside to focus on my big evening. I worked hard for it. The only physical challenge was dealing with blisters, which I resolved with some plasters and a good dose of humour."

From the experience, Tanya learned more than just how to prepare for a competition. "Competing taught me the importance of self-care, proper nutrition, rest, and recovery. It also shaped my confidence. I now tackle new challenges with enthusiasm. Fitness has become about building strength, and modelling has shown me the importance of presenting myself with poise."

To other women dreaming of the stage, Tanya offers thoughtful advice. "Be professional, trust the process, and enjoy the journey. Listen to your mentor's guidance, soak up the experience, and showcase your hard work. Own your transformation, and let your passion shine."

Tanya's journey is a reminder that goals have no age limit, and confidence can be built one step, one lift, and one moment of courage at a time.

Instagram: @t_vblerk

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Shaylize Gopal

Driven, Creative & Making Impact

#Model

Interview with Shaylize Gopal

Durban Model Search 2026 Winner

I'm 18 years old and I'm from Hillcrest, Durban. I'd describe myself as driven, creative, kind-hearted, and determined. I'm also a big gamer, anime lover, and JDM car enthusiast.

Shaylize recently won her category in the Durban Model Search 2026, and the young model says the experience has been life-changing. "I felt grateful, proud, and excited all at once," she says. "It felt like all my hard work was being recognised, and I knew this opportunity could become something bigger than just modeling, something that could also create positive impact."

When asked what inspired her to enter the competition, Shaylize explains, "I entered to challenge myself and grow, but also to gain a platform that goes beyond beauty. I want to build a career while using opportunities like this to support community projects, charity initiatives, and youth empowerment."

Shaylize's journey into modeling began with training at Roberta Alessandri Models, where she learned professionalism and developed her confidence. "Through modeling and pageantry, I've learned discipline, self-belief, and purpose. I've also been involved in charity drives and community work, which taught me that true success is about giving back, not just achieving goals," she says.

The Durban Model Search experience has been an eye-opener for Shaylize. "The most exciting part has been the growth environment. Being surrounded by motivated people, learning from industry professionals, and knowing that this platform can lead to both career opportunities and meaningful community impact has been amazing." It hasn't all been easy. "Balancing everything — school, training, personal life, competitions, and community work — has been the biggest challenge," she admits. "Learning to manage pressure and self-doubt while staying grounded has been challenging but very transformative."

Despite the challenges, Shaylize has grown in confidence and self-awareness. "This competition has helped me understand that confidence isn't about perfection — it's about purpose," she says. "I've grown into someone who believes in herself and her ability to not only succeed but also uplift others and make a difference."

Looking ahead, Shaylize sees herself exploring a variety of modeling opportunities. "I see myself in a combination of runway, commercial, editorial, and pageant modeling. I love runway and pageantry for the confidence and presence they build, and commercial and editorial for the creativity and storytelling. I also want to use every platform to promote positive change and community impact."

Family support has been crucial for her success. "My family has been my biggest support system," she says. "They've supported my dreams, my growth, and my involvement in community and charity work, and they've believed in me even when I doubted myself."

Shaylize says the modeling industry has taught her lessons she didn't expect. "I've learned that it's not just about looks — it's about discipline, attitude, professionalism, values, and responsibility. Your character and how you treat people matter just as much as your appearance."

Preparation is key for Shaylize. "Before a big casting, shoot, or runway walk, I prepare mentally first. I visualise success, focus on calm energy, remind myself of my purpose, and practice my walk. I also remind myself that I'm representing not just myself but the values I stand for," she explains. She believes what sets her apart from other finalists is her authenticity and purpose. "I embrace being a gamer, anime lover, and JDM car fan while also being elegant, confident, and compassionate. I'm not trying to fit into a mold — I'm building a brand that represents individuality, community, and impact," Shaylize says.

Winning the Durban Model Search 2026 would mean more than a title for Shaylize. "It would be a platform for purpose. It would open doors in the industry and allow me to expand my career while actively giving back to my community, supporting charities, empowering youth, and being part of projects that create real change," she says.

Her biggest dream in the modeling industry is to build a successful career while staying grounded. "I want to stay true to who I am and use my platform for community work, charity projects, and social impact — inspiring young people to believe in themselves and showing them that success and kindness can grow together," she explains.

Shaylize encourages others to take the leap, even if they feel nervous. "Do it scared. Don't wait for confidence — build it. Take the step, trust the process, and believe in yourself. You're capable of more than you think, and your voice, story, and impact matter," she says.

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Sphamandla

From a Township Dreamer to Pageant King & Model Mentor

Facebook: Sphamandla Skie Xulu
Instagram: @spha_xulu_supermodel
TikTok: @Sphah Supermodel

#Model

Sphamandla Nkosikhona Xulu

Also Know as Spha Supermodel

Sphamandla Nkosikhona Xulu, known in the fashion space as Spha Supermodel, carries his story with pride. The 29-year-old from Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, is not only a model but also a coach, judge, brand ambassador, and founder of Super Model Academy. His journey began in a place where male modeling was not always understood.

"Growing up, modelling was my dream," Sphamandla says. "But in the locations, being a male model meant people called you names. That made me scared at first." What helped him push forward was family support, especially from his sister, Sbongakonke Xulu, known as Mic Tap Tap Sbonga. She is the founder of Tap Tap Queens Agency and played a major role in opening the first door for him.

"My sister got me my first photoshoot in 2020 at uMfolozi Hotel Casino Convention Resort," Sphamandla explains. "After that, she encouraged me to enter pageants." He took the leap in 2022 and quickly made his mark. He was crowned Mr. Youth first runner-up, then went on to become the first-ever Mr. uMfolozi Municipality King. Later that year, he placed as Mr. Richards Bay first runner-up and Personality winner and finished third at Talent Africa Nationals.

Each title added to his experience, but Sphamandla says competing is still the hardest role he plays. "Competing is very challenging because you have tasks to do and you still need to find sponsorship, sometimes around R4,000," he says. "It is difficult to find sponsors with money. Everything needs funding, and it hurts when you know you have not met all the requirements."

Despite the pressure, his wins brought new attention in his community. After being crowned Mr. uMfolozi, he started receiving invitations to local events. Young people began approaching him for guidance. "Kids in my community asked if I could train them to become models too," he says. "It started small, then in 2025 I registered Super Model Academy." Super Model Academy now operates in Richards Bay and also reaches Mkuze, a rural area where he says opportunities are limited. "In Mkuze, modelling is not taken seriously, and young people don't know where to start," Sphamandla explains. "I decided to be the solution and help them reach their dreams." The academy's mission is simple: give young models the tools, guidance, and confidence to grow in the industry.

As a coach, Sphamandla focuses on much more than appearance. "I work hard on confidence and personality," he says. "Stage presence, communication skills, mastering Q&A, professionalism, and social media presence are also very important." He believes these qualities help models build long-term careers, not just win titles.

His own career had a major highlight when he placed third at Talent Africa Nationals. "That was part of a dream come true," he says. "I was even selected to compete in New York and New Jersey in 2023, but I could not go because I needed R65,000." Missing that opportunity was painful, but he did not quit. "Nothing stopped me. I carried on entering competitions."

Winning the first Mr. uMfolozi Municipality King title remains one of his most emotional memories. "It was only my second competition, and I asked myself, 'Who am I to win this?'" Sphamandla recalls. "Then I realized when you believe in yourself and God, nothing is impossible." That moment, he says, opened many doors.

In 2025, he received the Mr. Best Model Award, which he believes came from staying true to himself. "It was my dedication, uniqueness, and passion," he says. "I'm not just chasing titles. I want to make an impact, and people can see when you are real."

As a pageant judge, Sphamandla knows exactly what catches his eye. "I look for confidence, personality, and stage presence," he says. "Your smile, how you respond to the audience, your shoe technique, your walk, and your poses all matter."

Balancing his personal brand with his role as a Safa Umsindo Clothing ambassador has been smooth. "Everything I do for the brand is posted on my personal pages, and my academy work is posted on SMA pages," he explains. "So, both grow together."

One of the biggest challenges in his journey has been financial support. Instead of letting that stop him, he turned it into motivation. "I decided to become the sponsor for others to reach places I couldn't," he says. "Their win is everybody's win."

For young models who lack confidence, his message is clear. "Believe in yourself even when nobody else does," Sphamandla says. "Your confidence sets you apart. Own your uniqueness, work hard, and don't compare yourself to others."

Looking ahead, Sphamandla wants his name to stand for opportunity and growth. "I want to inspire a new generation of South African models to know their worth and follow their dreams without fear," he says. "Through my academy, I want to shape future talent and show South African beauty to the world. I want to be remembered as someone who broke barriers and made space for others to shine."

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